

# THE SHAKERITE

VOL. 88 ISSUE III MAY 18, 2018





## ON THE COVER

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David Vahey

### Creating Change, But at What Cost? Page 50

Spotlight Editor Ainsley Snyder takes a closer look at the rebranding of Generation Z as the “generation that will change the world.” While students embrace the opportunity to engage in activism, there may also be a burdensome expectation being placed on their shoulders.

## GUEST 'RITER

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### What's Your Top 10? Page 58

Joe Schmidt is a senior squash player who collects vinyl records in his free time. For his AP Composition class, Schmidt wrote a column on a topic he is passionate about. Schmidt said, “The only thing that matters is you believe you’re getting better every day — don’t worry about numbers attached to you.”

## THE EDITORIAL BOARD

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The Editorial Board governs Shakerite opinion coverage, writes 'Rite Idea editorials and serves as a guiding force for The Shakerite on policy and practice. The Board includes (left to right, back to front): Zachary Nosanchuk, Julia Barragate, DC Benincasa, Grace Lougheed, Emilie Evans, Greyson Turner and Emily Montenegro, who serves as chairwoman.



## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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If there's one thing I've learned in my time at The Shakerite, it's that impatience is a virtue. It's the leads that begin only as inklings — the ones shrouded in ambiguity and require uncovering — that mature into the most engaging, gratifying stories.

As I traversed my way through high school, I became ever more aware of the idea that there is no time to wait for stories, or people, or answers to fall into your lap; that in this job, patience is debilitating.

It felt as though, simultaneously, this position demanded more patience of me with each passing year, to which I responded with equal, if not more, impatience.

In just four short years, there is a glaring difference between the way in which this organization conducted its work in 2014 than it does now, in 2018.

My freshman year, I called everyone's office directly — there was no administrative assistant or PR representative acting as a middle man — and the granting of anonymity to discourage reprisals that appears in this issue would have been unimaginable.

Perhaps it is not the fault of this district, but rather only a reflection of a culture suddenly infiltrated with “fake news” and the paranoia of a sinister media being suggested by our country's president.

The more obstacles placed in my path as a journalist — emails requesting comment from administrators that are directed to another, only to be then directed back to the first, for example — the more impatient I become.

This impatience, however, does not provoke frustration. Instead, I am enthralled because my passion lies in a profession that must prove itself; that must work harder than ever before to protect the integrity of truth.

As this is my last issue of The Shakerite, I am pleased to be parting with the knowledge that this staff has been just as impatient.



I am thrilled to see where our next editor in chief, Astrid Braun, takes her staff and this organization next year, and I hope she leads them there with persistent impatience.

Grace Loughheed  
Editor in Chief



# The Shakerite

Volume 88 Issue 3 Spring 2018

## 03 Editor's Note

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## 06 Campus and City

Disrespect Toward  
Teachers



David Vahey

Walkouts 12

Marching Band  
2019 Trip 13

K-9 Unit  
Searches 14

SGORR Discussion  
Series 15

New Substitute  
System 16

Superintendency  
in Retrospect 20

## 28 Investigations

Shaker's Declining Enrollment

Investigations Editor Emet Celeste-Cohen takes a look at why fewer students are attending Shaker schools

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## 36 Opinion

'Rite Idea

The seniors of the Editorial Board reflect on the tumultuous changes throughout their four years of high school

Professionalism in Social Media 38

Opinion Editor Emily Montenegro prompts district to update guidelines for professional social media use

Online Assignments 40

Opinion Editor Emilie Evans points out inequities in high school's use of online homework assignments

#MyMomToo 44

Campus and City Editor Mae Nagusky shares her mother's story of sexual assault



Alexa Jankowsky



46  
**Spotlight**



Courtesy of Brad Ortman

**The Shakerite Profile**

Journalism II Reporter Ana Butze gets to know Izzy Ortman, a junior studying to become a firefighter

**Generation Z Activism 50**

Spotlight Editor Ainsley Snyder explores the meaning of activism for Generation Z

54  
**Raider Zone**



Alexa Jankowsky



Don Readance

**Racism in Sports**

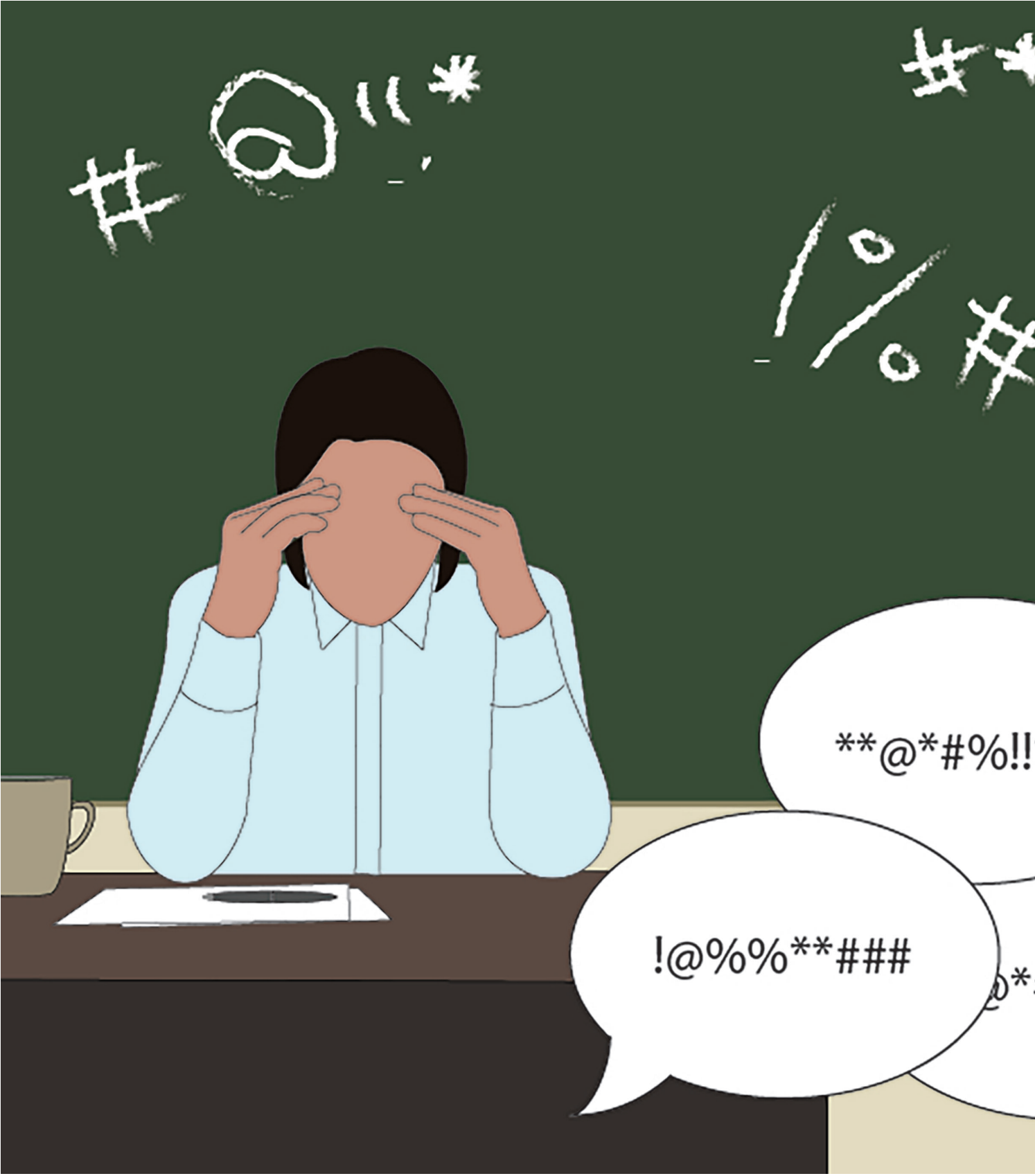
Raider Zone Editor DC Benincasa speaks to Shaker athletes about racist encounters on the field

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# IS DISRESPECT ON THE RISE?

Discipline statistics don't reflect frequency of disregard, insults and threats teachers report

MAE NAGUSKY CAMPUS AND CITY EDITOR

**“Who the f\*\*\* are you?! Are you some f\*\*\*ing sub?!”**

These profane questions, uttered by a student after school one day, were directed toward a teacher.

Another student tried to insult a teacher by calling her a lesbian. A student once accused a teacher of getting angry at the class because she “hasn’t gotten any d\*\*\*.”

Students have told teachers to “get the f\*\*\* out of my face.” One student yelled at a teacher for their “breath being poor.”

A teacher told a student to watch his language, and he responded with “Who the f\*\*\* does this bitch think she is?”

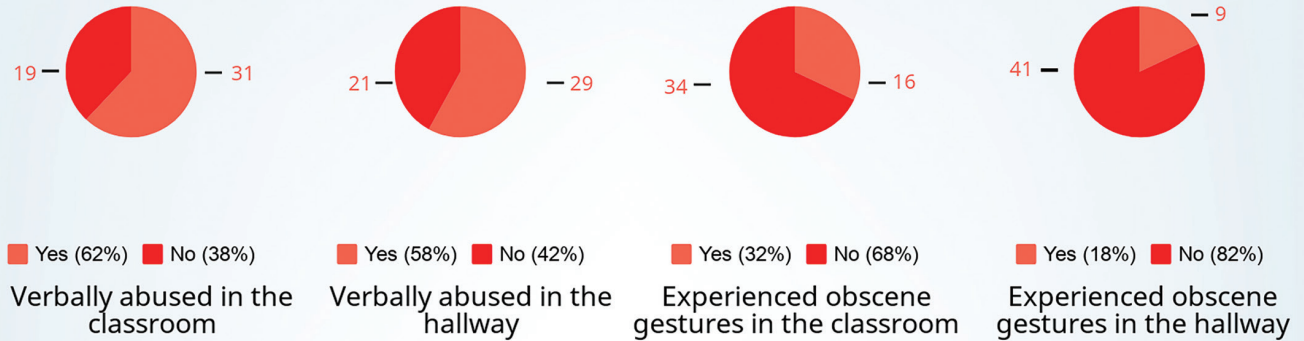
The instances above were shared with The Shakerite through a survey of high school faculty and interviews. The Google survey was sent via email to 149 teachers, and 50 teachers completed the survey within the response period. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they have been verbally abused in the classroom, and 58 percent said they have been verbally abused in the hallway.

The survey indicates that teachers experience different kinds of disrespectful behavior, from rude conversations to threats of violence. In comments teachers entered in the survey, teachers gave examples of verbal abuse that included enduring racial or ethnic slurs; being called a swear word; being the target of vulgar language; being yelled at; or receiving threats and insults.

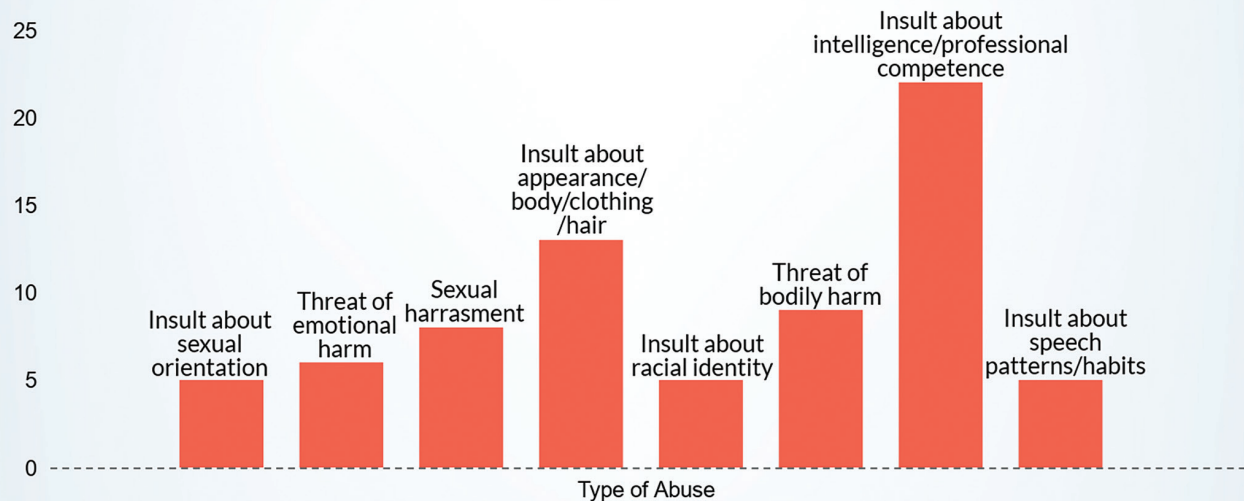
One student told a teacher to meet him off school property and threatened to fight him. Another student lifted a fist as if to punch the teacher. Another threatened to harm a teacher physically because of a grade the student received. Another student told a teacher that she should watch out or she “was gonna get it.”

## Student Behavior Survey Results\*

\*Out of 50 teachers surveyed



## Abusive Language in the Classroom



Mae Nagusky

In some cases, teachers reported that students said they would enlist family members in their threats.

A student harassed a teacher and then threatened that his mother and uncles would find the teacher. Another told a teacher that his uncle carries a gun — and then looked up the teacher’s address on a county website.

In other instances, misbehavior extended beyond words. Two students began fighting during a final exam, and one student pushed the teacher while she was trying to break it up. When a teacher tried to exit the building, a student blocked her path. One student pretended to masturbate behind his teacher.

Librarian Laura Daberko and

Spanish teacher Kimberly Ponce de Leon said they have been told to “f\*\*\* off” and called a “bitch” by students.

Teachers also reported that students insult their practice. A student accused Roy Isaacs, who teaches Core/Honors U.S. History and History of Popular American Music, of spending too much time talking about his Hispanic



heritage in class. Isaacs is European-American and Indian — not Hispanic.

“I found that to be a little more bothersome than someone using a foul word or getting angry — if it’s based in some bigoted misunderstanding of who I am and what my intentions are,” he said.

Despite these behaviors, the high school administration shared disciplinary statistics Feb. 12 that portray a decline in suspensions during the first semester this year. Principal Jonathan Kuehnle shared similar statistics from Shaker Middle School last spring. And high school disciplinary referrals for the first semester of this school year and last school year are dominated by attendance infractions — not instances of student disrespect.

At the high school, 2,325 referrals were written in the first semester of 2016-17 and the first semester of 2017-18, combined. Four percent were written due to vulgar language, threatening language or sexual misconduct. Seventeen percent were due to disruptive behavior or failure to comply. One percent were written for harassment or intimidation.

Sixty-nine percent were written for tardiness or class-cutting.

The contrast between teachers’ survey responses and referral rates for disrespectful behavior suggest that the behaviors are not being successfully addressed, or that teachers choose not to write referrals, or that teachers cannot write referrals for hallway behavior because they do not

know students’ names.

Only four teachers surveyed said they are more frequently disrespected in their classrooms than in the hallway.

“We have to understand that, in the hallways, there are teachers and students interacting that maybe don’t know each other, so the relationship isn’t there,” Dean of Students Greg Zannelli said.

**“Most students,  
if they know  
you, they’re  
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But, if there’s  
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that and be  
disrespectful.”**

**Kimberly Ponce de Leon  
Spanish Teacher**

Kuehnle implemented a policy Jan. 22 requiring students to wear their student IDs at all times. According to Kuehnle, the policy is primarily a security measure that allows security personnel to easily identify intruders.

For teachers, the policy would allow them to identify students who ignore instructions from teachers or who respond disrespectfully.

Few students, however, continue to wear their IDs.

When science teacher Maggie Parks asks students to follow rules in the halls, some respond, “You’re not my teacher.”

“It’s hard because if I don’t know that kid by name, there’s really not a lot I can do about it, unfortunately,” Parks said.

Ponce de Leon reiterated this experience. “Students that don’t know you in the hallways feel like they can get away with disrespect because you don’t know who they are,” she said. “Most students, if they know you, they’re respectful. But, if there’s an anonymity to them, they might take advantage of that and be disrespectful.”

However, Ponce de Leon said the ID policy has been useful in identifying students. “If a student has an ID, I can address them by their name,” she said. “Right now, I don’t feel like students are in favor of the ID’s, and I’d like them to see the usefulness of that.”

Half of the teachers surveyed said they notice more disrespectful behavior than they did earlier in their careers.

Daberko said she hears more profanity in the halls. “The language has gotten worse. There is less regard for following the rules,” she said.

Mathematics teacher Angela Harrell said it has become normal to hear profanity in the hallway. “I’m like, ‘What in the world? Why is there so much trash talk?’

But then I have a conversation about it," she said.

Harrell, who has taught at Shaker for 22 years, said teenagers today are exposed to more profanity than they were 20 years ago. This exposure changes their opinion about what behavior is acceptable. "Teenagers are teenagers," she said. "You have to actually teach people about the importance of language and what it means and what's appropriate here and what's not appropriate here. That's an environment thing."

A security guard, who spoke on the record but was granted anonymity to discourage reprisals, said there are 12 security guards stationed throughout the building until 4 p.m., and five after 4 p.m.

He said the building can be chaotic after school, especially if there is an athletic event scheduled. "We have to babysit for that two hours," he said. "Because they're kids, and that's what kids do — they get in trouble."

Isaacs said students sometimes misbehave to relieve pressure. "If a student's erupting in an actual physical fight, they're having this emotional release," he said.

The security guard said a lack of attention at home may cause students to seek it at school. "If you're my child and all I show you is love, you're not going to do anything but go out there and show the world love," he said. "But if you're my child and I'm not paying attention to you, it's going to show."

Freshman Julia Schmitt-Palumbo said students act out because they don't like authority, or because the teacher doesn't give them enough attention. She believes that punishment won't stop the student from acting out. "But it will show them what they are expecting if they plan to continue doing it, and if people don't want that, then it may hold some back," she said.

Zannelli said more respect is given in a one-on-one situation. "I have to talk to the student and teacher and see where it came from, what was said, the parameters of it," he said. "The key component is bringing the two together to find out what's the issue and build that relationship."

Isaacs said that tolerance plays a role in the amount of consequences he assigns or referrals he writes. "I think that I'm one that tries to not let my ego be the front of my teaching and then get into a power struggle with that kid and try not to be offended," he said. "There's other reasons the kid doesn't want to do the work or to be controlled and told what to do."

Isaacs added that a lot of conflicts with students can be stopped with a conversation. "I'm not somebody who writes a ton of referrals and I don't really see them as doing a lot of good," he said.

Zannelli said students are disciplined on a case-by-case basis. "If students are swearing out one another, my first instinct is to bring those students together, find out what the issue is and re-

pair their relationship," he said.

Zannelli and Director of Student Affairs Ouimet Smith both mentioned Shaker's restorative practices, which they first employed in 2013, as a strategy to curb disrespectful behavior.

Restorative practices comprise two components: a proactive component in which students participate in class discussions, called community circles, and a reactive component in which teachers and administrators hold meetings, called restorative conferences, with misbehaving students. Shaker Middle School students began community circles in 2014, and circles were instituted in ninth-grade English classes this year.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, restorative practices are "a set of informal and formal strategies intended to build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing, and respond to wrongdoings, with the intention to repair any harm that was a result of the wrongdoing."

These methods depart from traditional punitive discipline, such as assigning suspensions or detentions, which aims to punish the student for misbehavior and thereby discourage further offenses.

Since instituting restorative practices, the district has reported declines in disciplinary referrals and suspensions. In a PowerPoint comparing first semester discipline data at the high school in





2016-17 and 2017-18, the district reported a 38 percent decrease in infractions for disruptive behavior or failure to comply and a nearly 18 percent decrease in infractions for vulgar or threatening language from the first semester of 2016 to the first semester of 2017.

The PowerPoint also documented a 13.5 percent decline in detentions, a 60 percent decline in Saturday School assignments, a 35.6 percent decline in in-school suspensions and a 14.4 percent decline in out-of-school suspensions.

This decline mirrors the

trend in other states. According to the California Department of Education, “suspensions declined by a remarkable 46 percent” and expulsions decreased by 42 percent from 2011 to 2017.”

Isaacs encourages students to practice code-switching. According to Isaacs, someone who code-switches changes behavior and language to accommodate different people and situations.

“Not only is [the disrespect] wrong today and in my class, but it’s going to hurt you in the long run,” he said. “Consider really trying to switch how you talk in front of your grandparents, how

you talk in your religious institution, how you talk on your walk home. It’s going to be different for each one.”

Freshman Charlotte Cupp said it becomes habitual for students to disrespect teachers because they don’t recognize what they’re doing. “You should treat your teachers how you would treat another human,” she said. “If everyone treats others like a human being, we wouldn’t have these problems with hatred and disrespect.”

Out of 50 teachers surveyed, 38 said they are most frequently disrespected in the hallways. Photo by David Vahey





## Don't Stop The Music

Katie Cronin and Sylvie Prause,  
Journalism II Reporters

**A**ccording to ScienceOfPeople.com, music can reduce anxiety and boost mental alertness and memory; two things essential to student success.

The high school has blocked Spotify, a popular music streaming app, from their WiFi.

Director of Technology and Media Services John Rizzo said that content is blocked for one of two reasons: it hinders either student safety or connection to teaching and learning. Spotify falls under the latter, which encompasses websites and applications that are not tied to curriculum and can negatively impact network performance and computer security.

However, students find that listening to music improves learning and attention. "It's a good way to stimulate your brain and get tuned in to my work," freshman Natalia Glinzler said.

History teacher Kyle Fleming believes that blocking Spotify will not prevent students from listening to music during school. "There are so many other music things you could listen to music on, like iTunes. I don't think it will be effective to keep it blocked," he said.



Astrid Braun



## High School Students Walk Out Once More

Melina Ioannou, Journalism II Reporter

**H**igh school students walked out of school April 20 at 10 a.m. to push for gun reform and honor the lives lost at the 1999 Columbine High School shooting.

The walkout, which occurred on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shooting, was the second this year for Shaker students.

On March 14, students walked out to commemorate the lives lost at the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Fla. Both walkouts spawned from March for Our Lives, a national student-led movement for gun reform. Escorted by police cars, approximately 300 students walked to the front lawn of the high school at the start of third peri-





David Vahey

## Marching Band Plans 2019 Trip to Italy

Russell Markey,  
Journalism II Reporter

**T**he marching band, known as The Pride of Shaker Heights, will travel to Italy in the spring of 2019 for their tri-annual international performance trip.

The location of each band trip is decided by three committees. The first comprises band members who are nominated by their peers, the second comprises parents who are band booster officers, nominated by the directors, and the third comprises band directors, the high school principal and other administrators. The input of the first two committees is passed onto the third, which makes the final decision.

When asked about the value of international travel, Band Director Daniel Crain said, "Music is a universal language. You don't have to speak a word of the language. You can play music, and there's an instant connection."

od, then marched around the high school and Woodbury Elementary School, chanting, "Enough is enough," "Black Lives Matter" and "Protect kids, not guns."

Students then returned to the front lawn to observe a minute of silence for all lives lost to gun violence and participate in an open mic rally.

At the mic, freshman Max Carroll noted the importance of individual action. He said, "Change doesn't happen with one person, but it starts with one."

Audience members began to cry as one student made a speech about losing her father to gun violence when she was 2 years old. Freshman Aunya McFadden also approached the open mic. Instead of delivering a prepared speech, however, she sang "A Change is Gonna Come," by Sam Cooke.



Facebook//ShakerBandsInternationalTripPage



## Searching for Safety

Eliza Auten and Melina Ioannou,  
Journalism II Reporters



Eliza Auten

**T**he K-9 unit of the Shaker Heights Police Department entered the high school, unannounced, April 11 for the first time since Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings Jr. introduced the practice in 2013.

Both times, the SHPD used drug-sniffing dogs to search lockers.

Both times, the searches yielded no contraband.

While both lockdown drills during which the K-9 unit conducted its searches were unannounced, administrators alluded to the searches in communication prior to the event.

In a Feb. 11 email to community members, Principal Jonathan Kuehnle wrote, "In the spirit of open communication and maintaining a safe learning environment for our students and staff, please be aware that Shaker Heights High School

may conduct periodic searches of lockers and parking lots."

In an interview with The Shakerite, Kuehnle explained his decision to notify the community.

"We just felt it was appropriate given the current climate regarding school safety that we notify everybody — 'Hey, here's what we have in place, here's stuff that we do, just in case,' " he said. "Because if somebody sees us searching a locker, you know, it's only fair that you know the policy and the expectations."

Notifying parents and students that dogs will visit the school raises the question of whether the searches are useful in identifying problems as students who know the dogs are coming may leave illegal substances or weapons at home.

Junior Miles McCallum said that alerting the community of K-9 unit searches is inefficient. "I think that would sort of ruin the point. Granted, though, if you're committed to bringing something dangerous, you'll bring it anyways or find a way around," he said.

A 2011 Chicago Tribune analysis showed that only 44 percent of sniffer dogs' positive signals led to the discovery of drugs or paraphernalia.

However, Ohio has a very strict guidelines when it comes to police dog certification. Lt. Richard Mastnardo of the SHPD said each K-9 unit is certified annually and the department has the dogs complete maintenance training six hours a month.

"The school is actively working with the police department to keep contraband out of the schools," Mastnardo said.

"To let the community know that we do this — that we partner with the school district to bring the dogs — I think that that's OK because [the district] is not saying what day they're doing it, they're just letting the students know that 'We work with the police department,' " he said.



**According to the 2017-2018 student handbook, the board permits the superintendent to authorize the use of dogs trained in detecting the presence of drugs and explosive devices. These searches may be unannounced.**



## SGORR Hosts Criminal Justice Discussion Series

Melina Ioannou and Lauren Sheperd,  
Journalism II Reporters

**T**he Student Group on Race Relations hosted a criminal justice forum at the Shaker Heights Public Library Thursday, April 26.

The forum focused on how drug laws impact minority communities and was the second of a three-part discussion series that addressed race in the criminal justice system. The first forum, which took place April 12, focused on the school-to-prison pipeline.

SGORR member Natalie Green explained how the forum addressed injustices in the

criminal justice system. “Racism exists in a lot of institutionalized forms, especially in prisons and sentencing,” she said.

Approximately 30 community members and five panelists – all of whom hold jobs related to the local criminal justice system – attended. The forum began with information and statistics about drug policies and mass incarceration and then moved into discussion with questions for panelists and audience input.

Green said, “It was overall really informative, and I personally learned a lot. I had a general idea when I came in, and my knowledge was broadened.”

The final installment of the discussion series occurred May 10 and was an action-based meeting designed to produce solutions for concerns raised during the previous forums.



In their second forum, SGORR shared the following statistics: African-Americans comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population and are consistently documented by the U.S. government to use drugs at similar rates to people of other races. However, they comprise 29 percent of those arrested for drug law violations, and nearly 40 percent of those incarcerated in state or federal prison for drug law violations. Similarly, Latinos make up 18 percent of the U.S. population, but comprise 38 percent of people incarcerated in federal prisons for drug offenses.







# **Substituting One System for Another**

Although the district hired substitute management company Rachel Wixey and Associates to improve efficiency, teachers and students have noticed problems with substitute coordination

ETHAN BLOCH CAMPUS AND CITY EDITOR

A mug sits on the desk of Administrative Assistant Gloria Cottingham, who plays a large role in coordinating substitutes for the high school.  
Photo by Kay Petrovic

In an attempt to improve efficiency, Shaker has outsourced the recruitment and scheduling of substitute teachers. However, teachers and students are noticing problems with substitute management.

Rachel Wixey and Associates, known as Wixey, is a company based in Maumee, Ohio, that recruits, offers training to and schedules substitutes for schools in Ohio. "We focus on our core services of substitute recruiting, human resources, scheduling and employment, so that schools may focus on core services of instruction, curriculum, student safety, and the hiring and development of staff," their website states.

The service, first used by Shaker during the 2014-15 school year, is also used by neighboring school districts such as Beachwood, Orange and Rocky River.

Shaker previously assembled its own database of substitute teachers that the district recruited and approved. However, Wixey now provides all substitute teachers for Shaker. The company recruits substitutes, who are then added to a database. Teachers enter their absences online, and substitutes may pick which assignments they wish to cover through the Wixey website.

Executive Director of Communications and Public Relations Scott Stephens explained the reason for hiring Wixey. "A district the size of Shaker Heights can sometimes have a difficult time finding substitutes when they need them. Our thinking was that [Wixey] was more cost-efficient as well as time-efficient, and we could better ensure that we could have a qualified substitute in every classroom necessary," he said.

Dr. Lois Cavucci, director of human resources

for Shaker Heights City Schools, agreed that Wixey is better than Shaker's previous method of finding substitutes. "Otherwise, you have one person trying to find subs for the building, and that's a huge task," she said.

Wixey is provided to Shaker through the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio which, according to their website, "provides individualized support for area school districts through city/county services; fiscal management; contract services; direct program services; consortium and cooperatives; and interagency programs across many fields of education."

The ESCNO is able to provide Wixey to all member districts through the North Coast Shared Services Alliance. The NCSSA comprises the ESCNO and the education service centers of Lorain and Medina counties. The NCSSA partners with Wixey to provide its services to all participating districts.

Shaker pays a yearly fee of \$58,260 to the ESCNO, on behalf of the NCSSA, to pay for Wixey's services. Shaker pays the salaries of substitutes, as well. According to Stephens, no budget or staffing cuts took place as a result of hiring Wixey.

Orange City Schools started using Wixey during the 2013-14 school year to provide substitutes for classroom teachers and teacher aides. Before using Wixey,

teachers called in absences the morning of the school day, and Orange personnel would then call in a substitute.

Judy Robinson, director of human resources for Orange City Schools, said that a big reason for switching to Wixey was the increased efficiency of the online system, which allows teachers to enter their absences and request a substitute earlier. Robinson said another reason was that Wixey had a much larger database of substitutes than Orange

**"It feels like we have less coverage available and also less consistency in the ability to communicate with subs."**

**Aimee Grey**  
English Teacher

was able to assemble.

Unlike Orange, Shaker teachers have entered absences online using a software called Frontline Education for at least 10 years.

Robinson said she believes a shortage of substitutes is not unique to Wixey users. “Our experience with [Wixey] has been fine. The struggle that all schools have right now is a shortage of substitutes in all areas,” she said.

Nonetheless, teachers have expressed concerns with the efficiency of the third-party service. “My perception is that Wixey has actually made it more difficult for people to arrange for subs,” English teacher Aimee Grey said. “It feels like we have less coverage available and also less consistency in the ability to communicate with subs.”

Math teacher Angela Harrell said that she receives many email requests from administrative assistant Gloria Cottingham asking teachers to supervise classrooms in which the regular teacher will be absent, but no substitute is scheduled to cover. “About two to three days out of the five [of the week], you’ll see ‘class coverage needed’ ” emails, she said.

English teacher and Shaker Heights Teachers’ Association President John Morris said, “Our relationship with Wixey started out very rocky because we were not able to get the volume of substitutes that we really wanted,” he said. “I think it’s getting better. It’s not perfect.”

Morris also mentioned a lack of qualified special education substitutes. “I’d say one of the pitfalls right now of Wixey is that they do not have a lot of people who are certified in special education,” Morris said. “Those are highly specialized roles, and previously our HR department could kind of headhunt people to come in and be Special Education substitutes.”

History teacher Joseph Konopinski expressed concern about the cutoff time for entering an absence and requesting a substitute through Frontline Education. “I’ve even tried to put in that my daughter was going to be out sick and I needed to take her to the doctor — hours and hours before school, before my contract begins — and the website didn’t allow me to do it,” Konopinski said.



Alexa Jankowsky

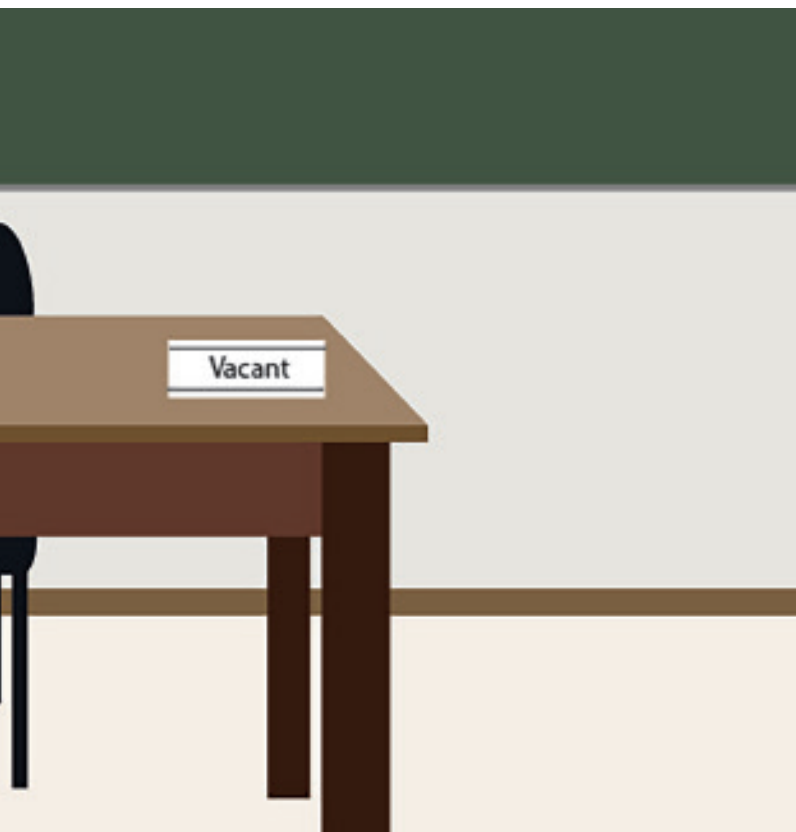
“I have to write an email to many people, hoping that someone sees it in time,” he added.

Frontline Education is not connected to Wixey. According to Stephens, the district is not aware of when the cutoff time is. Efforts to determine the cutoff time and which entity determines it were unsuccessful; sources in the district personnel department would not speak on the record, and inquiries to Frontline and Rachel Wixey & Associates were directed to the personnel department.

While Wixey assigns one substitute per submitted absence by a teacher, Shaker does ask substitutes to cover the classes of multiple teachers. Morris expressed the concerns of teachers about this practice. “You have people going from second period from one part of the building to third period in the other part of the building to a different class. They have to pick up a different set of lesson plans and try to begin that class on time,” he said.

“I think Wixey, but also our desire to be diligent and maintain our budget, caused increased problems with this issue.”





Stephens said that shortages in substitutes from Wixey could stem from last-minute requests from teachers. “Teachers, like any other human being, can wake up in the morning ill or, perhaps, right before they go to bed, they discover that they cannot make it in. So there has to be a lot of nimbleness with substitutes,” he said.

Stephens said that the administration is pleased with Wixey’s service. “We have found that, for the past three years, Wixey has helped us manage substitutes better than doing it ourselves. We have found it to be an improved system from what we used to do,” he said. “Eliminating the duty of assigning classroom subs each day frees up our HR department to spend time on other initiatives related to our 5-Year Strategic Plan. One specific example would be recruiting underrepresented areas, such as teachers of color or women who teach math and science.”

Before contracting with Wixey, the district designated one Shaker employee per school building to contact substitutes and schedule them. At the high

school, for example, this duty was fulfilled by secretarial staff who worked in the main office.

The lack of efficiency in substitute management expressed by teachers has manifested itself in unsupervised classes. Sophomore Lukas Zarders has been in a class with no teacher or substitute present. “Security only stopped by because we were yelling. I don’t think they even knew we were alone. They got the teacher next door to stay in our class,” Zarders said. He added that the classroom was unsupervised for about 30 minutes, until security arrived.

According to sophomore Kyle Langford, who also went to an unsupervised class, approximately 25 minutes passed before a nearby teacher noticed no teacher in the classroom and had a security guard come and supervise the class for the remainder of the period.

Langford said that his classroom became unruly when there was no supervision. “People started playing music. There were people jumping on desks. It was pretty crazy. I was just trying to do my work to get caught up because I missed a day,” he said.

Sophomore Lizzie Kohler and her class were told by their teacher to expect a substitute the next day. The following day, no substitute came to the classroom. According to Kohler, after around 30 minutes, the class received a phone call asking if a substitute was present in the room. After learning of the situation, the caller said a substitute would be there soon. A substitute, who had no plans at the time, came to supervise for the last 10 minutes of the period.

Kohler added that the substitute who came to supervise the class was not the planned substitute. “We asked the sub what happened, and he said that he was just waiting in the office. Then they said they needed him so he just went. Apparently he didn’t even know what period it was,” Kohler said.

A junior who requested anonymity also had an experience with an unsupervised classroom this school year. “We all showed up to [class], and no teacher or sub was there. A few people wanted to leave, and we ended up going to Ben and Jerry’s,” the student said. “Since there wasn’t a sub, we didn’t really miss anything, and nobody was hurt. It was a









# A Superintendency in Retrospect

Hutchings' tenure, at times contentious, comes to a close

GRACE LOUGHEED EDITOR IN CHIEF

In a Jan. 3 interview with *The Shakerite*, Superintendent Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings identified the peak and pit of his five-year superintendency — his best moment and his worst.

"The peak of my tenure here would have to be the Five-Year Strategic Plan, just the implementation of that, the adoption of it," he said. "That really guided all of the work and all of the achievements I believe we've made over the past few years. Without that roadmap, I don't think that would have happened."

"I would say the pit of my tenure would be the fact that I'm not going to see year five. I'm still going to be watching from afar, but I won't be able to be at the table with our team to finish the final year of our strategic plan," Hutchings continued. "I just feel like we've worked so hard, and I don't get to see it come to fruition the final year."

Hutchings will leave Shaker for superintendency of the Alexandria City Public Schools at the end of the school year.

"I am sad to leave behind all the truly extraordinary work we have accomplished together here in the Shaker Schools over the past four and a half years, though my decision to accept this new position fulfills a lifelong dream," he wrote in a Dec. 14, 2017 email to district faculty and staff notifying them of his decision to return to the Virginia district.

Hutchings served as director of pre-K-12 programs at ACPS for three years before coming to Shaker in 2013. He is also an ACPS graduate.

"I wasn't the valedictorian or salutatorian — like so many young people, I had to find my way with the support and encouragement of some outstanding educators," he wrote. "ACPS played such an instrumental role in shaping me into the person I am today that now, I want to return home to inspire the next generation of students there."

In an April 17 statement posted to [shaker.org](http://shaker.org), the Board of Education announced Dr. Stephen M. Wilkins, current assistant



superintendent of business operations and human resources, as interim superintendent for the 2018-19 school year.

According to the statement, the district's search for a permanent superintendent will begin in late summer.

The Board of Education unanimously voted to hire Hutchings on April 2, 2013 and approved his five-year contract at their April 9 meeting. Hutchings replaced longtime Superintendent Mark Freeman in the 2013-2014 school year.

During the January interview, Hutchings noted that many concerns coming from the community at the time of his hiring centered on equity. "I remember one of the biggest things was [hiring] someone who was going to be courageous enough to tackle the achievement gap and inequities within the district," he said. "I was nervous about that initially, but I was also intrigued by it because I'm a risk-taker and I believe that I have courage — all great leaders do."

Shortly after the BOE announced Hutchings' hiring, he told *The Shakerite* on April 23, 2013 that he planned for the post to be a long-term commitment. "This is not a stepping stone for me ... my life goal was to become a superintendent, not a superintendent at a number of school districts," he said.

In a 2009 cover story in the *Nashville Scene*, Renita Cobb, a teacher at West End Middle Prep, where Hutchings once worked, said, "When I'm in a nursing home, I'm going to turn on the TV and see Dr. Gregory Hutchings, secretary of education."

In a May 2013 interview with *The Shakerite*, Hutchings admitted that the federal post was an aspiration. "But, I would like to be at least 50 years old by the time that happens," he said.

Hutchings first addressed staff and faculty in his Aug. 22, 2013 convocation speech, which he modeled after Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

One of the dreams Hutchings enumerated was seeing his children graduate from the high school. "I have a dream that all 5,500 students, including my own two children, will be able to graduate from Shaker High School ready for college and careers," he said in the speech.

In January, Hutchings acknowledged that this dream would not be fulfilled. "Now, my kids won't be graduating from Shaker high school," he said, "which was not a part of my trajectory at that time when I was making that speech.

"But now, knowing that my kids are going to graduate from my high school, my alma mater, to me is a win-win situation. I didn't get the Shaker high school, but at least they get to graduate from my own high school."

In his 2013 convocation speech, Hutchings also hoped that during his tenure the district would be "transparent, clear, and timely with the community to keep them informed of our efforts to become a 21st century school district that keeps students first."

In January, Hutchings said the district has met this goal. "Oh my gosh, in transparency, we have hit that 100 percent," he said. "I think sometimes people have forgotten about how we really didn't give a whole lot of information prior to my arrival because that was actually one of the characteristics they were looking for in the next superintendent — they wanted someone who was going to be transparent."

During this interview, Hutchings also attributed the district's successes to this transparency. "All of the things that have happened over the past few years only happened because people knew of the different decisions that were going on, and that comes from being transparent and informing the community about decisions that we're making as a district," he said.





Hutchings delivers speech at class of 2017's convocation. Photo courtesy of Shaker Heights City Schools

Regarding transparency, Hutchings added, “I think we hit that nail on the head.”

However, in the spring of 2017, the district's transparency became a heavily-scrutinized topic.

On April 29, 2017, approximately 50 Shaker parents met with Dr. Terri Breeden, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, to discuss the district's decision to eliminate K-4 Woodbury science lab visits, instead opting for in-class lab kits, as well as replacing the K-4 science coordinator position with a districtwide technology supervisor.

According to Breeden, the team that works on the strategic plan — including school principals, Breeden and former Director of Curriculum Amy Davis — made the decisions.

News of the change came to parents' attention, leading some to locate a document about it online. The statement was found on page three of a memo to the school board in an online Board Packet for the week of April 10-13, 2017. The first two pages

comprised links to education stories in the media and shaker.org articles about student achievements. The third page detailed the science lab and coordinator decisions.

Breeden explained that she didn't believe she had “blindsided” anyone with these decisions, quoting the word many in attendance had used to describe the administration's communication of the decision.

Breeden did admit faults communicating with parents, especially regarding the Board Packet. “When I wrote that, I was writing to a governance, policy, well-informed school board member. I should have written it and given a lot more rationale,” she said.

She went on to explain the challenge of deciding whom to inform first. “It's sort of ‘chicken and egg,’” she said, wherein one is metaphorically the



school board, and the other metaphorically the community members.

In his convocation speech, Hutchings emphasized school safety. “I have a dream that every student feels physically and emotionally safe at school, secure in the knowledge that every adult in this district is invested in their success and well-being,” he said.

A month into Hutchings’ tenure, in Sept. 2013, flaws in the high school’s safety and security protocols came to light.

On Sept. 10, 2013, a 15-year-old student was arrested at the high school for the alleged rape of a female student Sept. 10, 2013. He was later convicted of rape and kidnapping more than a year after incident.

In the Jan. 3 interview, Hutchings explained the increased security measures taken at the high school in light of the incident. “I think that particular incident really heightened our awareness. From that incident, we have more cameras installed in our blind spots throughout our building, we provided more training for our security officers — security officers began to have a totally different protocol in regards to routine,” he said.

Hutchings noted that the incident improved the relationship between the Shaker Heights Police Department and the high school. “I mean it’s unfortunate because that was my first month on the job, but it did force a relationship between the schools and the police department at the beginning of my tenure that we continued to maintain,” he said.

In November 2013, student safety at the high school entered the spotlight again when Hutchings announced he would permit drug-sniffing dogs from the SHPD during an unannounced lockdown drill.

In a Nov. 8, 2013 email to parents, Hutchings explained, “The main purpose is to provide training for the dogs, but if they detect drugs in lockers or other school-owned property, we will follow up in accordance with school policies and Ohio laws.”

The K-9 unit failed to find any drugs during a 20-minute lockdown drill on Nov. 13, 2013.

In January, Hutchings recalled negative re-



sponses from community members. “Some of our community members, as well as some of our employees, they thought, like, ‘This might be too much,’ to bring dogs into the schools and, ‘Why in Shaker? Shaker is not that type of environment.’ Now, you fast forward to four years, and now people are telling me, ‘Why am I not bringing them into the schools?’ I’m, like, finally full circle; now I get the support to bring them in. So, they will be coming back,” he said.

“I guess I brought it too soon. I was from a different area — I’m not from Shaker. And at that time, people wanted to remind me that, ‘We don’t do this here in Shaker Heights,’” he said.

High school administration conducted a “stay in place” drill April 11, 2018 in which the SHPD K-9 unit was deployed. Again, administration reported no contraband was found.

Student safety became increasingly relevant after Hutchings and the school board faced scrutiny for placing former Lomond kindergarten teacher Cathleen Grieshop, who now works at Boulevard





Hutchings addresses the community in his first State of the Schools presentation Feb. 10, 2014. Photo courtesy of Shaker Heights City Schools

dures for allowing students to go to the restroom or their lockers and what to do if a student goes missing, particularly how long to wait before contacting someone and who to con-

tact, vary among the schools.

A culture of low teacher morale at the high school was uncovered in light of the Lomond incident.

The SHTA published a May 11, 2015 open letter to the school board, administration and community via social media addressing concerns that emerged in light of policy changes in both the building and district.

The letter was organized into five categories that identified the high school membership's concerns: an increase in the micromanagement of teachers, a decrease in autonomy, rash changes in policy, a lack of teacher input and a lack of response to calls for change from administration.

"The high school represents some of the most dramatic changes because of the loss of our head principal, the implementation of new programs like MYP, the stress of testing, the [Student Learning Objectives] and also the fact that we have such autonomous teachers," Morris said.

Former Principal Michael Griffith announced April 13, 2015 that it was his final year at Shaker and left June 30 to become the head of the Ratner School.

"One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Shaker Heights High School has been the wide array of unique programs and approaches the school has to offer," the SHTA open letter stated. "This has been due in large part to the intellectual freedom building leaders and teachers have been given to implement and support these programs. Much of this freedom has been sacrificed to district-wide reform."

"The letter expresses that the pace of change, the type of change, the stakeholders in the changes that are being proposed, need to be very carefully selected," Morris explained. "They need to be conscious of the history we have of autonomy in Shak-

Elementary School, on administrative assignment Jan. 9, 2015 for the remainder of the school year after a student asked permission to go to his locker and instead ventured outside the building.

According to English teacher and Shaker Heights Teachers' Association President John Morris, Grieshop realized her student was missing after five minutes and immediately called the main office, computer lab, lunchroom and aftercare. A neighbor noticed the student and called the police three minutes later.

Shaker teachers and parents voiced concern over Lomond and the district's security practices at a Feb. 10, 2015 Board of Education meeting. Fernway third-grade teacher Lena Paskewitz read a letter signed by 123 Shaker faculty asking the district to "use this unfortunate event to review and improve [security] procedures" rather than firing Grieshop.

In a March 10, 2015 interview with *The Shakerite*, Hutchings declined to say whether Grieshop had followed Lomond's protocols. He said proce-





er, and they need to be paced at a human level, as opposed to a corporate or a planned level.”

The approach, according to the letter, includes overly centralized hiring practices, excessive focus on SLO testing and IB Middle Years Programme compliance (while issues such as poor student attendance go unnoticed), and the destruction of collaboration in the teaching environment.

At a May 21, 2015 forum sponsored by the Shaker Parent Teacher Organization, which approximately 200 community members attended, Hutchings expressed confusion over the low morale of the high school staff. “I don’t know what the reasoning behind us being divided is, I really don’t, and I’m hoping I can figure it out. I hope someone can share it with me,” he said.

In January, however, Hutchings provided a reason for the low morale. “I don’t know if it was necessarily — this is my perspective — that it was necessarily something that I did to cause that,” he said. “I think it was really about the change process,” he said.

“The moment I walked in the door without even saying a word, it was different,” he added.

Hutchings said that he was unsurprised by the feelings of teachers. “There is a change cycle that people experience, and it’s very similar to the grief cycle, where you go through down’s and you go through up’s until you get to acceptance,” he said. “All of that was expected and all of it was typical for any time change occurs.”

“I think there was just a lot of changes happening at all once from all different areas, whether it’s at this level, the local level, the state level and the national level. I think that contributed to some of it, too,” Hutchings said.

Executive Director of Communications and Public Relations Scott Stephens, who was present at the Jan. 3 interview, added, “Sometimes you tend to blame people — whoever’s handy.”

**In January, Hutchings said, “I think the biggest thing that I’m going to miss the most are the people — students being the number one.” Photo courtesy of Shaker Heights City Schools**



Stephens continued, “If a cop pulls you over about some new change in a speed limit on a highway, you don’t automatically direct your anger to the state legislators who changed the speed limit. You direct it at the cop who pulled you over even though it’s not the cop’s fault — he’s doing his job.”

Despite attributing the sentiments of teachers to the “change cycle,” Hutchings also expressed personal responsibility for the situation. “But, at the end of the day, I own it, too,” he said.

Reflecting on the Lomond incident and subsequent low teacher morale, Hutchings offered advice for Shaker’s next superintendent. “They’re going to have to be a leader that really doesn’t take things personal,” he said. “Sometimes there’s a little drama. You have to rise above it. You can’t get into it.”

In August 2013, Hutchings announced his first policy move — ending social promotion at the middle school, which had allowed students to progress to the next grade even if they failed one or more of their classes.

In the January interview, Hutchings explained that ending the policy allowed the district to better serve its students. “That was the beginning that kind of set us on that trajectory of really serving students who have some academic deficits and not just allowing them to fail a course and then you still pass them through,” he said.

“I think that we put a lot of kids in a better place — and we didn’t have a lot of kids who weren’t promoted due to that policy — because I felt that we put so many safeguards in place so that we can really address those students’ needs before the end of the year to prevent us from having to retain a lot of kids,” Hutchings added in January.

A change in the middle school’s grading policy followed the end of social promotion. Under the new policy, teachers no longer may enter zeroes for assignments students do not complete and must enter 45 percent instead.

In the winter of 2017, local politics became energized as the district experienced a rare, highly-contested school board race that resulted in the ousting of an incumbent.

In January, Hutchings said he believes that

community members were impassioned to run for local office due to the 2016 presidential election. “It was like an uptick. Everybody was excited about running for something, and there was a lot of contention,” he said.

Stephens also noted the increase of women running for office. “It’s interesting, you hear of more women nationally filing for political office — for a variety of reasons. We can all talk about some of the obvious things, perhaps,” he said. “It’s hardly a coincidence to me that you had three women vying for four positions.”

Hutchings added that the contended race was not unprecedented. “This isn’t the first time that we’ve had a contended race, so that’d be different if it was our first time — but it’s not,” he said. “I think that because of our transparency and because of our communication, people are more engaged, and I think that’s a good thing. People may not have been paying attention as much before and now people are — which is great.”

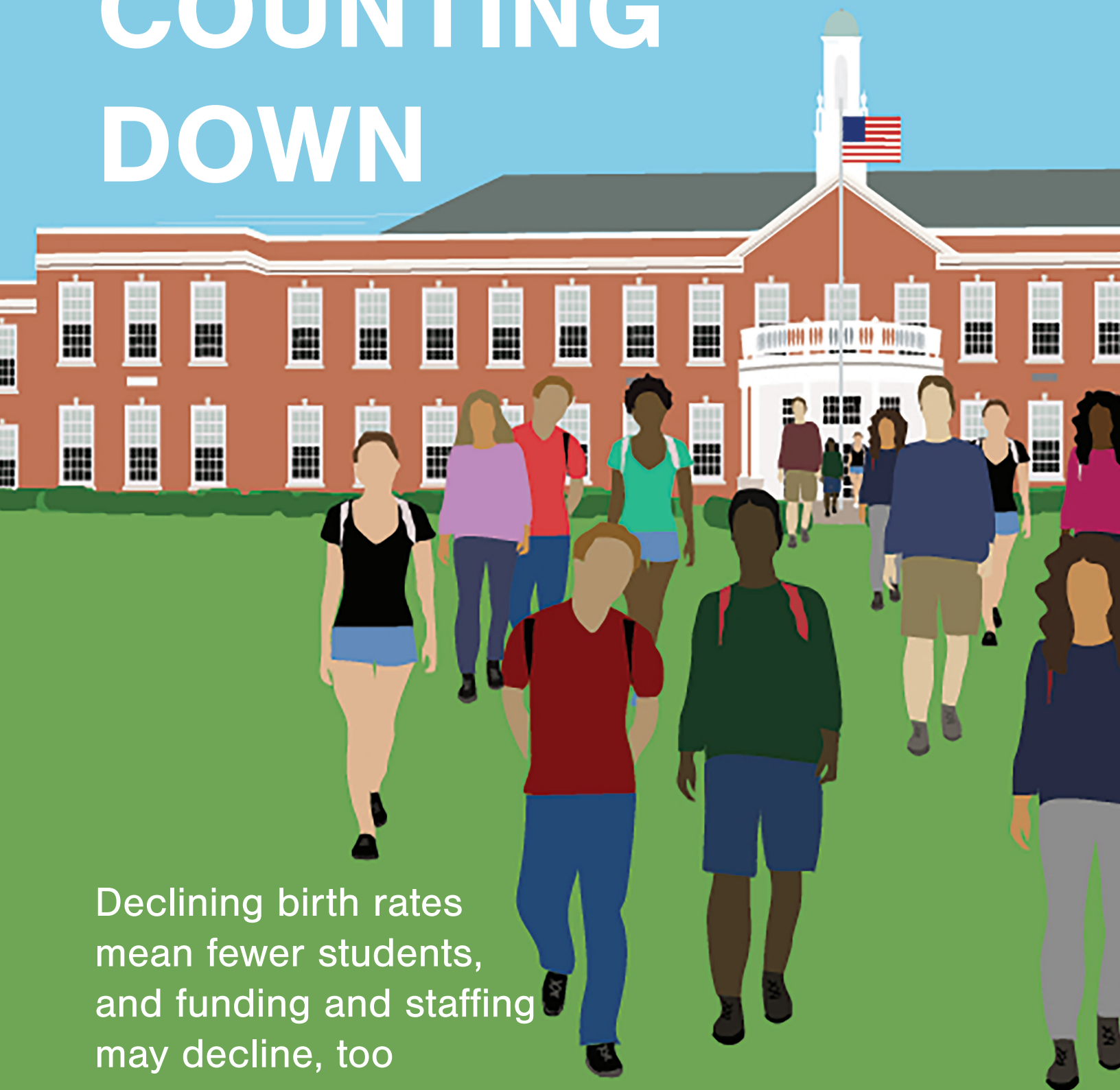
“I was over the moon to know that we have people who want to be on the board and are willing to campaign to be on the board — that to me says a lot about them as individuals and it says a lot about our community,” he added.

In regard to Shaker’s next, permanent superintendent, Hutchings believes the community needs someone who will maintain the progress the district has made during his tenure. “I think that when the community was looking for a new superintendent in 2013, they were looking for a change agent — someone who was going to come in and steer us in a different direction, but still stay true to our tradition of excellence,” he said. “Whereas now, I believe that our community would want a leader to continue the work that we’re doing — enhance it of course and refine the work— but it’s not changing everything that we’ve already started.”

In January, Hutchings expressed gratitude for his Shaker superintendency. “I just think this experience for me personally has been one of the best professional experiences I have ever had so far in my career — seriously,” he said. “Shaker has brought the best out of me and I know I’m going to be forever thankful for that.”

INVESTIGATIONS

# COUNTING DOWN



Declining birth rates  
mean fewer students,  
and funding and staffing  
may decline, too

Emet Celeste-Cohen  
Investigations Editor





S

**haker is losing** students.

Over the past decade, district enrollment has declined by more than 370 students.

That's nearly the equivalent of this year's seventh grade class. And District Treasurer Bryan Christman expects the district to lose another 342 students in the next four years.

To anticipate and react to enrollment changes, the district contracts with Public Finance Resources, a firm that, according to their website, "was created to serve local government organizations such as school districts, townships, villages, cities, and counties with their financial forecasting needs."

It's their forecast that Christman uses to predict future enrollment. "They actually access live birth data, and then they project out for the five years to predict how many students might be enrolled in kindergarten five years from when they're born," he said.

In past years, the number of students entering kindergarten has been around 93 percent of the recorded births five years prior. Mike Sobul is Shaker's specific consultant from PFR and helped make this forecast. Using this norm and current birth data, his firm projected kindergarten class enrollment to be around 330 students each year in the next four years.

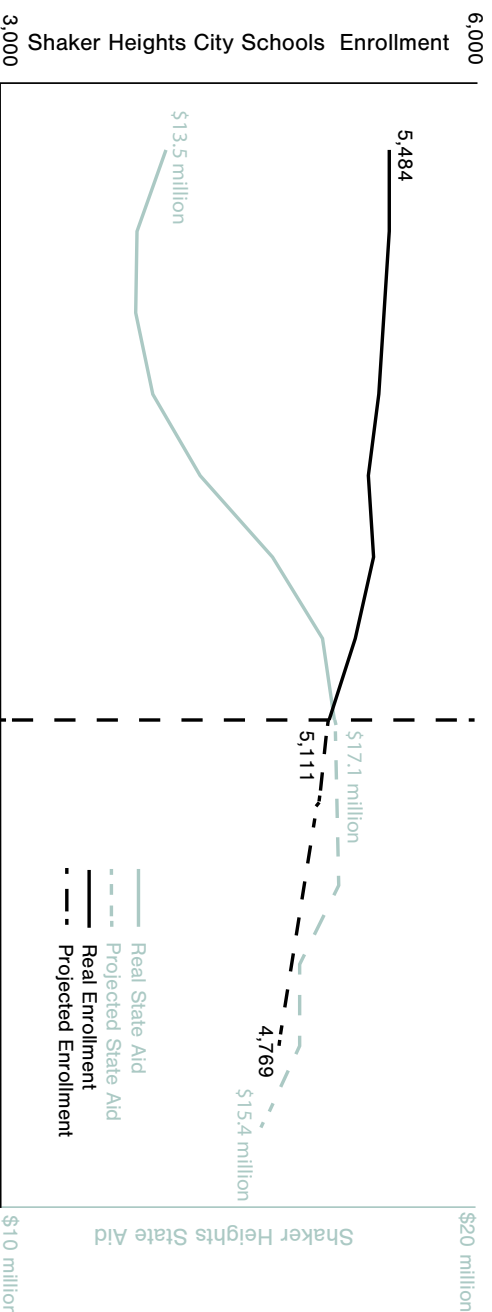
According to district enrollment counts, senior class sizes will be close to 390 students each year in that same interval.

For the next four years, if 390 students graduate and only 330 enter kindergarten annually, the district will lose 60 students each year. Declining kindergarten enrollment thus accounts for about 70 percent of the anticipated enrollment losses. But that still leaves 100 of the 342 students unaccounted for.

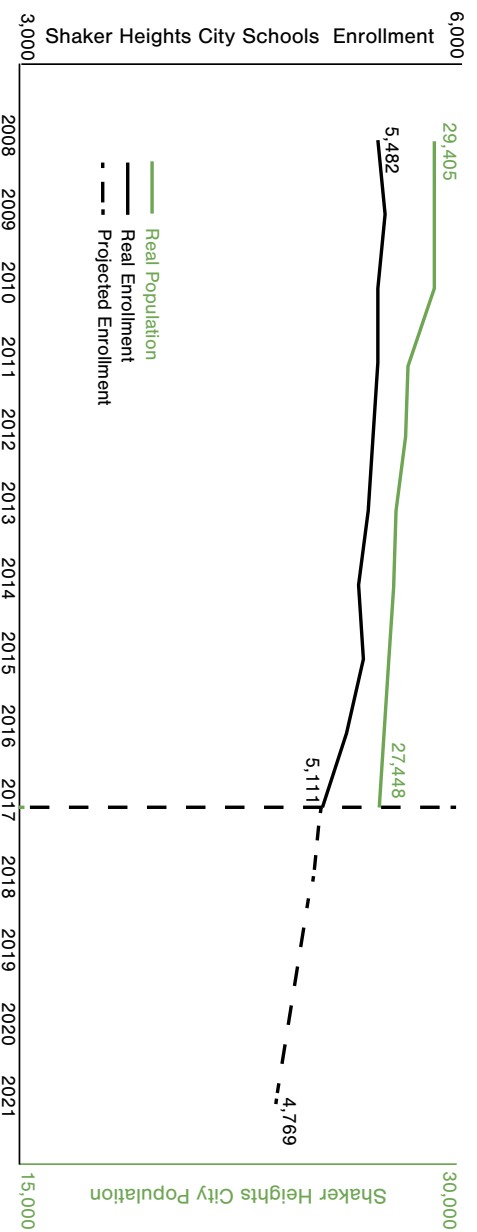
Those 100 students are lost due to mobility — what Sobul calls a survival rate. "Families move out. Families move in," he said. "On average, over the last period of years, the families moving out have net losses of 15 to 30 kids relative to families moving in."

That means at least 15 more kids are moving out

## Real and Projected Grants From State



## Real and Projected Enrollment Shaker Heights City Schools



than moving in each year.

In the past, mobility has not substantially affected K-7 enrollment. For example, using past averages, this year's kindergarten class is predicted to increase by two students by the time students reach fourth grade.

This year's third grade class is predicted to increase by nine students by seventh grade. But every seventh grade class over the next four years is expected to increase by 10 students on their way to eighth grade.

The jump to ninth grade is even more dramatic: On average, these classes will see 45 new students enter between these years. So far, these numbers suggest a net increase of students moving in.

Christman explained this growth. "Some kids will be in ninth grade but, they're really sophomores, or they're in their tenth year because they don't get enough credits to be classified as a tenth grader," he said. "Some kids go to private school for their early ages and then go to high school at publics."

As these classes advance through high school, however, these gains are eliminated.

From ninth to tenth grade, PFR predicts an average of 40 students leaving the district each

year. Twenty-seven leave before junior year. Then, 20 going into senior year.

Overall, PFR predicts 22 students leaving each year due to mobility. Over four years, this adds up.

Sobul summed up the losses: "You have a little bit more move-outs than move-ins. Plus you have kindergarten classes that are quite a bit smaller."

The next question is, why? Why is enrollment dropping?

The answer is complicated.

"It can be lower birth rates. If you have an aging population, which a lot of places like Shaker do, where the average age of the population is getting older, then obviously there's less opportunity for young kids," he continued.

"That's a pretty standard thing that we see in a lot of areas in Ohio, especially northeast Ohio where the population is aging."

Christman agreed. "If the population's aging, they become empty nesters; they're not having kids in the school," he said.

Shaker is getting older. Since 2009, the average age of people living in the district has increased from 39.4 years old to 40.5.

At the same time, this trend is being seen nationwide. The average age of people across the country increased by 1.2 years in

**"You also have home values in Shaker that are pretty high."**

Mike Sobul, PFR Consultant





Overall, PFR predicts 22 students leaving each year due to mobility. Over four years, this adds up.

**Photo by Emet Celeste-Cohen**

the same time.

And in neighboring districts, it is even more distinct. Solon City saw an increase of 2.5 years to an average age of 44 years. The Beachwood average has settled at 50.3 years old.

And, though the number of children being born in Shaker Heights is decreasing, the amount of women who live in Shaker Heights and had children increased from 4.13 percent to 5.09 percent over those eight years.

Shaker's decreasing birth rate may be a function of fewer Shaker residents choosing to have children. But it also could be the result of fewer women -- and people -- choosing to live in Shaker overall.

Since 2008, nearly 2,000 people have left Shak-

er. That's a 6.7 percent drop in population. This mirrors, almost exactly, the 6.8 percent drop in students enrolled in the district over that time.

"A lot of it is the robustness of the economy," said Sobul.

"In northeast Ohio, the economy is less robust than where I am here in central Ohio, where we have a lot more younger families moving into the area, which allow for more of that type of growth," he continued. "You also have home values in Shaker that are pretty high, and so that makes it harder for younger families to be able to afford to move in."

According to Zillow.com, an online real estate database, Shaker home values are at a 10-year high with median house selling prices at \$228,100 — a figure 71 percent greater than home values on average across Ohio.

Zillow.com ranks the Shaker market as a buyer's market — based on "sale-to-list price ratio, the prev-



absence of price cuts on home listings, and time-on-market” — but it’s those increasingly high house values that Sobul thinks keeps young families away.

Shaker’s population, however, has been steadily decreasing since before 1990 through periods of high and low house values.

Though they may have had an impact, they aren’t the only reason for a declining population. People aren’t just leaving Shaker because taxes are too high and houses cost too much.

The question of why enrollment is declining is answered as lower birth rates, smaller kindergarten classes and more families

**“If the  
population’s  
aging, they  
become empty  
nesters; they’re  
not having kids  
in the school.”**

Bryan Christman  
Treasurer

moving out of Shaker than moving in. But we don’t know why those things are happening.

Why are families moving out of Shaker? Why aren’t young people moving in?

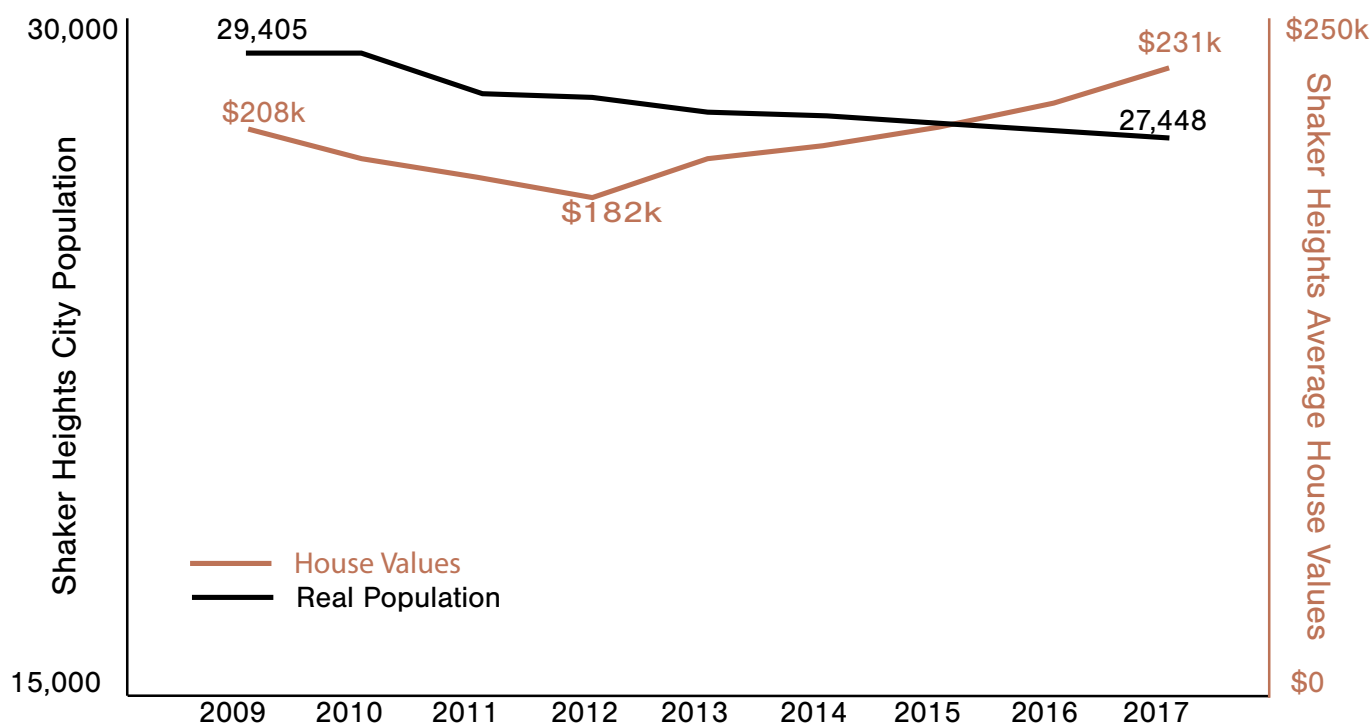
The uncertainty stops here, however.

PFR and Christman are pretty sure of what’s going to happen if enrollment keeps declining. They’ve even agreed on a number: \$3,379,764 lost over the next five years.

Each year, the state gives aid to districts based on their enrollment. This year, Ohio gave Shaker \$17 million. The majority of the district’s revenue comes from lo-



## Shaker Heights Average House Values



cal property taxes, but that state aid still made up 18.4 percent of the district budget.

As enrollment drops, so should that \$17 million. There is, however, another factor: the guarantee. Traditionally, the money the district receives is based on a formula — again, calculated using enrollment.

But if a district starts losing students, the state doesn't want them to lose money immediately.

A guarantee basically ensures that a district gets the same amount of money from the state as the previous year. With such a guarantee, the district should not lose state funds, right?

Not quite.

Every two years, the state legislature passes a new budget, and this year, they added a requisite: If a school district loses more than 5 percent of its students over the two-year period, the guarantee no longer applies to them. Instead, the state funds they receive will once again be determined by the formula.

Despite declining enrollment, Shaker hasn't lost 5 percent of its students in a two-year period. In the next two years, the district is expected to lose 3.2 percent of them.

In the two years after that, 3.8 percent. Without the guarantee, the district would already be receiving less state funding.

"Essentially what that is saying is that if the formula was just allowed to work with no guarantee, Shaker would actually get \$954,000 less than the \$17.2 million," Sobul explained. "So, [the district] might get \$16.3 million."

Presumably, all Shaker has to do is keep their enrollment declining by less than 5 percent and they'll stay on the guarantee and continue to receive the \$17.2 million a year from the state. However, according to Sobul, no one likes being on the guarantee, and there's a good reason why.

"There's a potential that the legislature could come in and say, 'This year we're only guaranteeing that you get 95 percent of what you got last year,' "

Sobul said.

“Maybe they’ll change it to a 5 percent drop over four years instead of two,” Christman said. “Maybe they’ll lower the percentage to four or three.”

The state rewrites the budget every two years, and in a political climate that does not make funding schools a top priority, Christman says, that danger is very real. It’s real enough for him to assume that, even if we don’t drop 5 percent in enrollment, there are still going to be budget cuts.

Budget cuts of more than \$3 million. Shaker would need to add around 310 students in one year and keep those numbers up in sequential years in order to get off the guarantee.

“You’re going to be hard pressed to see 300 new students coming into the district,” Sobul said. “Whether its a 600-kid kindergarten class, or, instead of losing 25 now you’re talking about gaining 200 or something more move-ins.”

“Something like that’s going to have to happen, which, in a community like Shaker, is probably pretty unlikely,” he continued. “What that means is that as long as the current funding formula stays in place, Shaker’s most likely going to stay on the guarantee.”

“As numbers of students decline, we need to adjust our staffing levels accordingly,” Christman said. “I think the superintendent has been mentioning that pretty frequently in the last couple months.”

These adjustments can be implemented in two ways: attrition, when teachers retire or resign and aren’t replaced, and reduction in force, when teachers are fired and aren’t replaced.

In an April 10 Board of Education meeting this year, members laid out four different options: first, no change — the district continues to replace teachers as they leave; second, attrition starting in the 2018-2019 school year; third, attrition in 2018-2019

and RIF after that; last, both attrition and RIF starting in 2018-2019.

The board laid out in more detail who would be affected by attrition and RIF.

Through attrition, the district expects about six teachers to leave (one English teacher, one math teacher, one world language teacher, one social studies teacher and several others).

Utilizing RIF, they’d expect to eliminate 14 more teachers (six from elementary schools, four from the middle school, three from the high school and one support teacher).

According to Christman, however, cutting those positions won’t be enough to make up for the loss of state funds. He expects new school levies as state funding decreases.

“Right now we’re projecting to have a new levy in 2020 that first starts collecting in 2021,” he said. The expected levy would bring in a projected \$2.9 million the first year and \$5.8 million every year after that.

Christman posed the question, “Do increased taxes discourage families from relocating in the district?”

If they do, higher levies would mean even lower enrollment, which would introduce the need for more levies and so on. “Obviously that’s the delicate balancing act,” he said.

There are two beliefs: either our enrollment is spiraling or it’s

seasonal.

As the district introduces tactics to accommodate enrollment decline such as higher levies and more teacher cuts, either enrollment will decrease even more so, or the city will rebound to former heights.

Christman is of the latter camp. “Certainly neighborhoods rejuvenate. They turn over from being empty nesters to being families with young kids. It’s cyclical,” he said.

**“You’re  
going to be  
hard pressed to  
see 300 new  
students  
coming into  
the  
district.”**

**Mike Sobul  
PFR Consultant**





# Living on *the Edge*

*The Editorial Board*  
*Illustration by Alexa Jankowsky*

**As a class**, this year's seniors have seen a lot — from Twitter feuds and a new standardized test each year to communication blunders and three different principals during our four years at the high school.

While we turned all of these things into rich, abundant journalistic opportunities, outside of the newsroom, our academic lives existed in an unsettling flux.

At the beginning of our first three years, we were forced to adjust to a new principal and new policies.

After becoming to accustomed to former Principal Michael Griffith our freshman year, he announced his resignation on April 13, 2015. The community was devastated to see Griffith's 15-year tenure come to an end.

Former Student Body President Phoebe Potiker ('15) told *The Shakerite* in 2015 that Griffith "has worked so hard to create what the high school is today and what Shaker stands for as a district. For me he's the face of SHHS and I'm so glad he was my principal for all four years."

For the class of 2018, there has been no face to associate with our years at the high school, but instead a slew of new ones that

never seem to stick in our memories.

After Griffith's resignation, the district hired Interim Principal James Reed III. Despite encouragement from the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association to extend Reed's tenure into our junior year, the Board of Education instead hired yet another unfamiliar face: Jonathan Kuehnle. Once again, we began a nine-month adjustment period.

Unlike the others, however, Kuehnle has been present for more than one year of our high school careers. At the end of our junior year, it seemed, finally, like we could catch our breath, adjust and not have to write a farewell story on the latest principal in our final print edition of the year.

While we made it to the end of our third year without a new principal, we didn't make it to the end of our fourth without publishing one of those stories — this time, however, it is our superintendent we are seeing off.

Although we won't be here to endure the change, the Dec. 14, 2017 announcement of Superintendent Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings leaving at the end of this year is only fitting to close the curtain on this four-year-long production.

Through all of this, we have been always on the brink of stability and normality without ever fully making it there.

If what we've been told countless times — that what makes an education flourish is the forging of meaningful relationships between students and educators — is true, we can't help but feel that our own may have been slighted.

If we don't have ample time to do so, we will never create meaningful, trusting relationships with our administrators or educators, which is the case at the moment as administrators come and go and teachers' class sizes grow ever larger.

For the students who remain after we cross our graduation stage in June, we hope that the district can reconcile these years of uncertainty. We hope that students after us enjoy high school careers unaffected by confusion about who will be in charge next year and what new policies they'll attempt to enforce.

Shaker owes its students a quality education, and if that means filing through three principals in four years or a superintendent in five to provide it, then so be it. But let this year's graduating class be the last to know what it feels like.





Alexa Jankowsky

# Adults Need The Lesson in Twitter Etiquette

Emily Montenegro Opinion Editor

**At 8:56 a.m.** on Friday, April 13, the New York Times released a news alert: “President Trump called James Comey an ‘untruthful slime ball’ on Twitter. The former FBI director’s new memoir takes aim at the president.” Simultaneously, Shaker Heights High School teachers began a school-wide lesson about student behavior on social media.

The Common Sense Media lessons, prepared by Principal Jonathan Kuehnle’s Student Leadership Team, first asked students to evaluate statements about employer or college access to personal social media accounts. Then, students assessed two invented students’ social media pages and considered which student would be admitted or hired.

It is crucial that young people learn proper online conduct — especially with increasing access to technology. Every year, more ways are devised to

teach a 5 year old not to click suspicious links, a 10 year old not to cyberbully or an 18 year old not to jeopardize their future on Twitter.

Let the ironically-timed New York Times notification remind us which demographic is truly a danger on the internet.

Twitter exists in a gray area wherein seemingly anything goes: Presidents can pick fights with world leaders, news organizations can share breaking news and our own Shaker administrators can entangle themselves in PR nightmares.

I have no concerns about official Twitter business — the platform is convenient and accessible. However, a closer look at Shaker administrators’ Twitter accounts reveals nonexistent universal guidelines for professional conduct. It is fair to say that any Twitter user whose username directly

references their profession — ie, @ShakerPrincipal — is operating a professional account.

Kuehnle's Twitter account lacks consistent professionalism and, by making himself too accessible to students, he threatens to undermine his own authority. To his credit, Kuehnle's timeline mostly comprises retweets, congratulations and excessive exclamation points. On the rare occasion that he pens his own tweet, however, he chooses tones, language and sometimes even content that are bound to hurt more than help his communication.

On March 1, the night before Shaker was expecting inclement weather, Kuehnle tweeted, "SNOW DAY TOMORROW? (Made you look!) Today represents the start of Women's History Month. It's also Ohio's 215th birthday!"

Twitter is one of the easiest means of communicating a snow day, and students look to this platform for legitimate information from their school's and administrators' Twitter accounts. Tweets this immature, however, initiate a boy-who-cried-wolf communication mess. No school employee, let alone a principal, should publish the phrase "snow day tomorrow" as a rhetorical question.

Twitter's accessibility is a two-way street, and Kuehnle has chosen to not only deliver information, but also to respond directly and, at times, immaturely to students. On Jan. 29 at 8:23 a.m., junior Katrina Cassell tweeted to the principal her opinion of the newly-implemented ID policy. She called it "idiotic."

Five minutes later, Kuehnle responded via Twitter, "Sounds like a frustrating start to a Monday. Get here a few minutes earlier and remember to wear your ID, and things should go smoothly. Don't blame the system — adjust to it." In his next tweet, Kuehnle asked, "Are you allowed to be on your phone during [your class]? Asking for a friend." He named Cassell's first-period class in the tweet, thus revealing part of her academic record and placing her teacher in an awkward position.

To Kuehnle, I would recommend taking Twitter more seriously. Social media should always reflect the user's personality and voice, of course, but the voice in this case should be professional, serious and sincere. Never respond to students.

Superintendent Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., doesn't tend to respond to the public on Twitter. He does, however, walk the thin line between a personal and a professional Twitter account. I can't fault him for posting pictures of his family or fraternity anniversaries, because it's not dissimilar to displaying family photos on one's desk at work — personal, but not unprofessional.

But Twitter accounts are far more visible than desks, and among students, personal photos of the boss invite snickering responses. This publication has featured Hutchings' tweeted pictures, especially of his bow ties, in the past.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Terri L. Breeden tweets almost as frequently and glowingly about the Washington Redskins as she does about Shaker's educational events. Her blurred professional/personal account is not dissimilar to Hutchings'.

To Breeden and Hutchings, I would recommend creating unique work and personal Twitter accounts, respectively public and private. Their pictures of kindergarten visits, educational conferences and other professional events would be more relevant if not lost among inspirational quotes and non-Shaker sports news on Breeden's timeline or family photos and bowtie purchases on Hutchings'.

Professional use of social media is not uncharted territory. The Shaker Staff Guidelines for Social Media, Blogs, and Online Practices were established almost 10 years ago, but have not been updated for five. Now that our president is setting horrendous norms for professional Twitter accounts, Shaker should consider redefining how professionals should conduct themselves on Twitter.

The existing guidelines warn against sharing compromising photos and engaging with students, but they don't address the increasing use of public, professional accounts.

Shaker employees should use uniform usernames, limit personal photos and, if the account does not reflect their professional identity, make it private.

If young people are expected to behave maturely on public social media accounts, educators should be setting the proper example.



# From Paper and Pencil to Computer and Wi-Fi

As more homework must be completed online, the equity gap increases, and so does students' stress

Emilie Evans Opinion Editor

**Once upon a time**, a boundary existed between the school building and the home. A student would sit in each class for 50 minutes a day and leave with an assignment to complete before class began the next day.

Today, instructors can turn any place with a computer and internet connection into a classroom. Suddenly, we don't have an assignment tucked somewhere in a folder that's due tomorrow; we have a screen staring at us as the clock ticks down the minutes until an online assignment is overdue.

Schools nationwide are turning to digital learning. However, this technology is only valuable if every student can access it. And even then, the extra stress that accompanies these assignments leaves us wondering if the effort to capitalize on technology is worth it.

In 2017, Shaker became a Google district, creating Gmail accounts for every student and encouraging teachers to employ Google Classroom — a free, cloud-based service.

According to shaker.org, this decision was characterized as an enhancement of district practices “to help increase efficiency, facilitate commu-

nication and support the already great work being done by our students, faculty and staff.”

French teacher Eileen Willis began using Google Classroom in October 2017 after attending a conference organized by the Ohio Foreign Language Teachers Association.

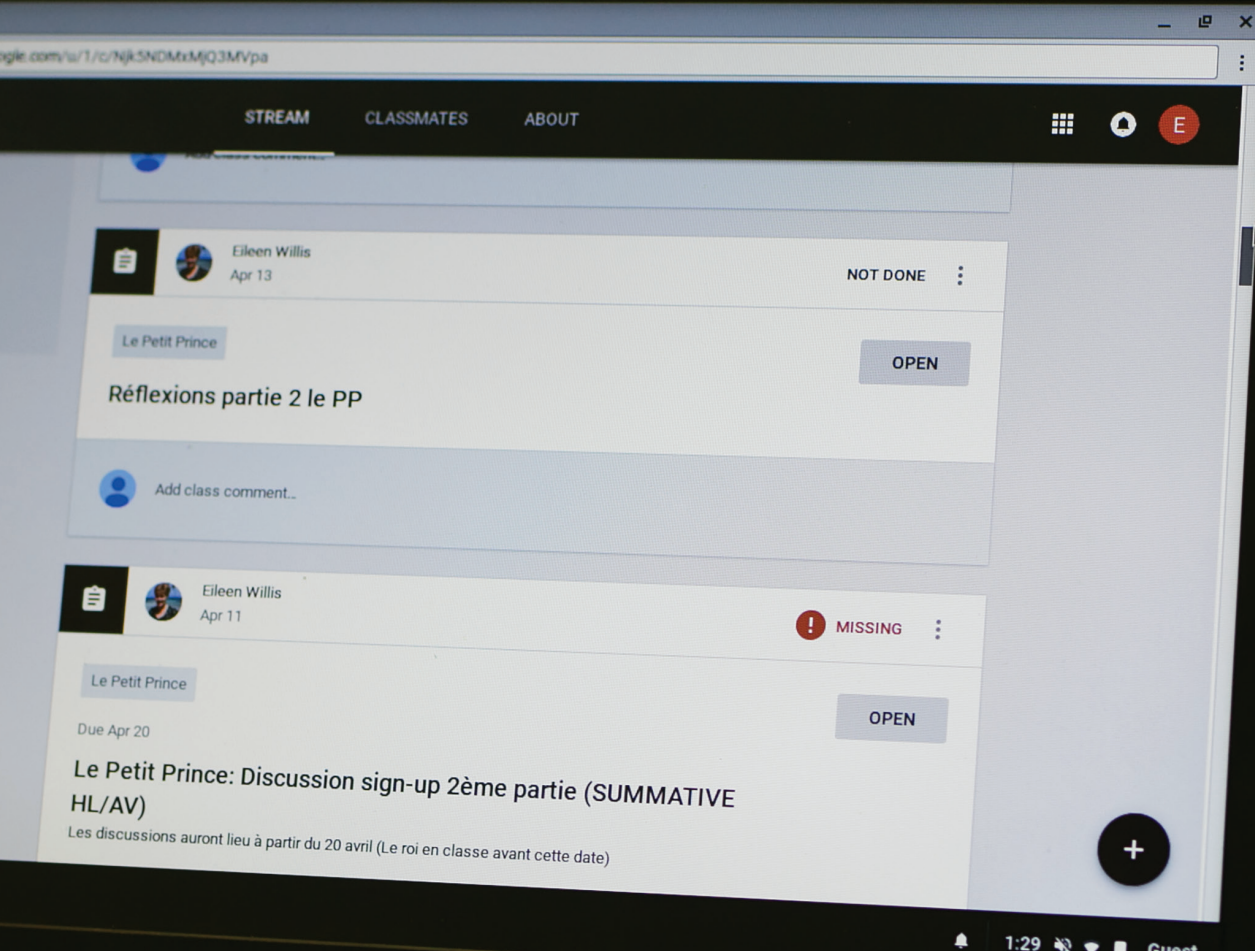
“I learned how to set up a Classroom and I went to a couple of other short, general trainings for Classroom teachers,” Willis said. “There are also several teachers in the department who have experience, and some who were really helpful any time I made an error.”

She continued, “I really have not heard many students complain about [Google Classroom]. Most people seem to view it positively.”

Senior Margaret Bartimole, however, expressed



After becoming a Google district in 2017, Shaker teachers began using Google Classroom to assign homework to students. Photo by Grace Loughheed



concerns about the use of Google Calendar, another cloud-based Google service, and Google Classroom. “I just think teachers should tell us our assignments in human form because it feels too electronic — not personal,” she said. “No one is explaining what we’re doing, no one’s explaining why we’re doing it. It’s just like, ‘Check Google Classroom.’ I don’t like that.”

Bartimole also said that it’s harder to stay atop online assignments. “I feel like it’s easier for me to get behind on Google Classroom. I feel like I hold myself more accountable when I turn in a physical copy,” she said.

EdWeek reported that 68 percent of districts nationwide, including our own, use Google Classroom to remind students about due dates, upload

notes and assign online work.

But more teachers making this switch produces a widening technology gap. According to the

National Education Association, approximately 70 percent of teachers were assigning homework that required internet access in 2009. However, at that time there were 5 million American households with school-age children that did not have high-speed internet service.

Given that the NEA study was done nine years ago, it’s safe to assume that today more than 70 percent of teachers assign homework requiring internet access.

The technology gap is essentially an extension of the achievement gap. Students without internet service or personal computers risk falling behind



# Households with School-Age Children that Do Not have Broadband Access

Percentage of houses that lack a high speed connection with an annual income under \$50,000



31.4% of all households interviewed



38.6% of African-American households interviewed



37.4% of Hispanic households interviewed



24% of Caucasian households interviewed



15.5% of Asian households interviewed

Percentage of houses that lack a high speed connection with an annual income of \$50,000 or greater



8.4% of all households interviewed



13% of African-American households interviewed



12.8% of Hispanic households interviewed



6.7% of Caucasian households interviewed



4% of Asian households interviewed

Infographic: Grace Lougheed, Data: Pew Research Center

as more assignments are accessed and completed online.

Willis expressed understanding for students without internet access at home and their rare situation in a screen-ruled world. “Everybody can always tell me that and they can either come in and work in class, or work during conferences” she said. “I always give extensions for situations like that. It’s not a problem.”

Executive Director of Communications and Public Relations Scott Stephens noted an item in the district’s Five-Year Technology Plan that states that during the 2015-16 school year, the district would “perform a survey to determine technology accessibility in homes throughout Shaker Heights.”

However, this study was never completed. According to Stephens, “It will be rolled into our new technology plan.”

Students without internet access must jump over extra hurdles to catch up, including spending

extra time at before- and after-school conferences, the library and friends’ houses.

For these students, homework can’t be done in the comfort of their own home. They must spend extra long hours — tacked on to the end of an already long school day — in conferences or at the library, propped up at a desk, staring at the harsh blue light glowing from a computer screen.

And for some students, even making it to the library before it closes may be difficult. The Shaker Heights Public Library closes at 9 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 p.m. on the weekends.

I spent half of high school exploring new tactics to catch up to my classmates because I didn’t have access to a computer at home.

Teachers are usually understanding when it comes to these circumstances. However, discussions with them were only half the battle — the other half was finding a way to complete the assignments.

Homework assigned on websites other than

Google Classroom was the most difficult to complete because it was harder to access. My first generation iPad wasn't compatible with websites that required an Adobe plug-in, such as Pearson's Mastering Biology or Mastering Chemistry.

To dodge this roadblock, I spent time in biology conferences. However, there were days when I wasn't able to make it to conferences due to sports, clubs, my job or the demands of other classes.

When my teacher would ask everyone about an assignment that I wasn't able to complete, I would raise my hand and, before saying a word, he'd laugh, nod his head and the class would join in. It was lighthearted fun, but it concealed a much bigger issue: In 2017, the idea of a student not being unable to complete an online assignment was comical.

Online assignments posted on Classroom are usually due at midnight, requiring students to upload and submit them by that time. If a student submits the assignment past midnight, it is automatically marked as late. However, it can still be accessed.

Not every online program allows this flexibility. On Cengage, an online program commonly used by science teachers, students cannot access their assignments after 11:55 p.m.

So, for students who only have internet access at school, it's impossible to complete these assignments for late credit the next morning.

Once the clock strikes midnight, the algorithm in the computer marks outstanding online assignments as missing, automatically reducing a student's grade.

While some teachers do offer the option of coming to conferences to reopen the assignment, it usually can only be completed for late credit.

Teachers differ in their late credit policies; they can assign anywhere from full to partial to no credit, which can discourage students from completing the assignments as it may not help their grade in the long run.

Additional stress caused by online assignments is seemingly justified by the belief that they help students learn — whether skills future jobs or by keeping them organized — but without access,

students cannot practice the skills the assignment is designed to reinforce.

Even for students with internet access, online assignments can be stressful. The digital classroom redefines homework, forcing students to adjust their habits.

Going home is supposed to allow students time to themselves without teachers and deadlines. Any work they're expected to do can be completed on their own terms — right when they get home, late at night, or the next morning.

Because homework is assigned to help students review, as long as they complete and understand it, it has served its purpose.

However, students now have less autonomy when they complete their work as it must be done on a computer screen and turned in before they go to sleep, rather than completed the next morning or throughout the day before class.

Allowing students to turn in homework when they should be sleeping encourages the belief that it's acceptable to lose sleep over schoolwork.

Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should.

Just because we can make something digital, doesn't mean it's better for learning — especially if that something isn't equally accessible to everyone.

Being relatively new to the Google game, Shaker teachers are discovering the lengths they can go to with their online assignments. But individually doing this creates inconsistencies in the demands on each student and confuses us as we try to figure out the new way to navigate homework.

Teachers, please consider some uniform approaches to limit the demands you make of us online, such as making assignments due at the beginning of class the next day and thus giving students as much time to finish online assignments as they would paper ones.

The age of digital learning has arrived and will not end.

It's crucial to discuss what can be asked of students at home, what's fair and how the teachers and the school board are going to work to close the equity gap created by technology and online assignments.



# #MyMomToo

As sexual assault awareness grew, my mother shared her story

Mae Nagusky *Campus and City Editor*

*Trigger Warning: This article includes information about rape and violence.*

**My mom** is a rape survivor.

On June 10, 1990, my mom went to sleep in her own bed and awoke to a stranger hovering over her, holding a knife. Her life would never be the same again.

She was stabbed.

A man aimed for my mother's face with a knife. A knife that cut wounds that never fully healed. Wounds that are powerful reminders from that night. A knife that left her with painful emotional and physical scars. A knife that made my brother and me cry when concentrating on the story that emerged from my mother's mouth one evening last November. The same mouth that screamed and screamed and screamed for help on June 10, 1990. A knife that stabbed through my mother's middle finger while she protected her face, leaving her with the scar to show her children today.

My mother was raped.

She felt broken, hopeless and scared. She was treated like she was just another mangled, worthless body.

She was left that day in terror, bloodied, bruised and scarred. She was left that day with a crushing story to tell her daughter 27 years later.

As I watched sexual assault movements unfold last fall, my mom told my brother and me about her rape experience.

I absorbed each word — hearing this nightmare made me feel weak and helpless. My heart plummeted to my toes. I felt fear in my stomach. My throat



grew numb for lack of knowing how to articulate my fear, my sadness, my anger.

Memories of all of the times my mom was extra cautious leaving my brother and me alone stormed back to me. Nothing is left to chance when dealing with the security of my home. My mom lives her life in constant vigilance.

It all, suddenly, made sense.

This is why I learned as a 9-year-old child that nearly one in five women are raped in their lifetime. That a woman is raped every 98 seconds. That I should never ever walk home alone.



Alexa Jankowsky

This is why she always asked if anyone touched me at school. This is why she insisted that the most important thing in a relationship is feeling safe.

Survivors of rape, such as my mom, live daily with underlying fear, caution and, sometimes, panic.

It's impossible to imagine how they endure this constant torture.

Rape survivors have to deal with being catcalled when they're walking down the sidewalk minding their own business.

They have to endure snarky rape jokes that cut to their core and fester long after the punchline is delivered.

On Reddit, a social media platform, one man said, "It's a fact 9 out of 10 people enjoy gang rape."

Another man said, "I was raping a woman the other night and she said 'Please, think of my children!' Kinky bitch." Another man joked around, saying, "A man walks up to a woman in a bar and says, 'You're going to get laid

tonight.' A bit surprised, she asks, 'Really? How do you know that? Are you psychic?' 'No, I'm just stronger than you.' "

Rape is not funny. These comments encourage future assaults because they disguise human misery in misogynistic "humor." These jokes force a young woman to believe her body belongs to someone else.

Complaining about hearing rape stories is like watching a world on fire and complaining about how ugly the ashes look.

Complaining about hearing so many rape stories would be fair if there were no rape stories to tell.

How many cries for help have been silenced by men and people of power? Rape is a product of power. Sex and violence are all factors of rape, but not the reason.

That man had power; he had power over my mom's mind and body. He stripped my mom's power away from her like it was merely a dull sticky note on a chalkboard.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, more than 90 percent of rapes in college are never reported to authorities.

Do you realize how many bodies — how many living, human beings — are violated and objectified and assaulted every single day?

Every single day, my mom navigates her life differently because of her rape.

She felt guilt for years even though she did nothing wrong. My mother was not asking for it; neither are the other 321,500 women raped each year. Clothing does not correlate with consent. No, she was not asking for it. She said "No;" a two letter word that has a definition universally known, but not respected.

How many rape stories will it take for men to respect "no" — to stop calling women bitches, hoes and sluts?

It has become a social norm to rap along with lyrics such as, "Put Molly all in her champagne, she ain't even know it - I took her home and I enjoyed that, she ain't even know it," Rocko raps. "You ain't gonna let me f\*\*\* you and I feel you. But you gone suck my d\*\*\*, or I'll kill you," Chief Keef raps.

Lyrics like this degrade women and should not be socially acceptable. This is not OK.

It breaks my heart that people will claim that this was her fault. My mom endured what seems like the hardest thing anyone would have to suffer through. Yet, writing this seems impossible.

This column will not end sexual assault, this will not make what happened OK. These events are unspeakable, yet need to be spoken.

I am writing this for all who need someone, who need a story, who need a survivor. My mom is a survivor — a woman of power, of strength, of defiance.

I hope that someday, no other woman will be those things because of rape.







# Izzy Ortman to the Rescue

The 17-year-old junior climbs 100-foot ladders and carries 200-pound dummies while studying to become a firefighter

Ana Butze Journalism II Reporter  
Photo by Astrid Braun

**High school juniors** are typically preoccupied by questions about where and how they will find themselves after graduation.

Izzy Ortman, however, is not an average high school junior — she has everything planned out.

At 17 years old, Izzy is studying to become a firefighter at Tri Heights Fire Tech at Warrensville Heights High School.

The program serves junior and senior students from Warrensville Heights, Maple Heights, Bedford Heights, Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights school districts.

It provides students 60 credit hours toward an associates degree, emergency medical training and a firefighter license and certification — all before the students cross the stage at their high school graduations.

Izzy attends firefighting school every

weekday, along with about 15 other students, five of whom are female.

She is the only Shaker student in the program and has earned all of the credits required to graduate from Shaker Heights High School.

This is Izzy's first year at Shaker; she previously attended Lawrence School and Agnon School.

While she enjoyed the smaller classes at her previous schools, she transferred to Shaker in pursuit of new experiences. "I wanted to get to know new people and make new friends," she said.

According to her father, Brad Ortman, Izzy fell in love with firefighting after attending a summer camp for public safety last summer.

"She first wanted to be an emergency medical technician, but now decided she wants to be a firefighter. Perhaps she may gravitate to another similar occupation that is less physically demanding, such as nursing, at some point in the future," he said.

Juniors in the Tri Heights program complete firefighter awareness, EMT awareness, CPR and two National Incident Management System courses. NIMS is intended to provide a national, common standard for emergency incident management. Seniors complete the Fire/EMT curriculum during the first part of the school day and then travel to Cuyahoga Community College Western Campus for basic fire academy training.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the firefighting students have academic days, during which they complete reading assignments and take notes. Their homework takes approximately two hours to complete.

Tuesdays and Thursdays are physical training days, during which students perform aerobic activities such as running



around a track or to a local fire station. “One day, we climbed a ladder on top of a fire truck that was about 100 feet in the air,” Izzy said. “During winter, we will sometimes run outside, but mostly in the recreation center, and we sometimes carry oxygen tanks on our backs and run up and down the stairs a couple times.”

In one strengthening drill, the students carry a 200-pound dummy from one side of the school parking lot to the other.

The dummy was nicknamed “Dirty Dan” by last year’s seniors because of its dirt and grime.

Izzy’s father believes she was destined to go into emergency services and said she has more experience than most 17 year olds.

“A woman in a car in front of our house had just suffered an aneurysm,” he stated in an email. “Blood was coming out of her nose, and she was laying on the horn of her car. Isabel noticed the commotion,

and she immediately called 911. An ambulance came and rushed this woman to a hospital.”

“Days later, when she had recovered, she came back to the house to thank Isabel for saving her life,” he added.

Firefighting training is not Izzy’s only forte; she is also a member of the crew team and admired by her teammates. “I kind of feel like a role model, in a way, because they look up to me about what I’m doing. It’s just a great feeling,” she said.

Freshman Aine Jameson, one of Izzy’s teammates, shares this admiration.

“She is very energetic, and there is this great energy being around her. If I tried to describe every attribute of her, we would be here for a while,” Jameson said. “I think if anyone were to [be a firefighter], it would be Izzy. She’s got the right mindset for it and she’s really good at working in teams.”

Antoine Crews, who has been an instructor at the program since 2006, sees leadership skills in Izzy.

“She has taken on hard tasks, group leading, and has kept up with her personal training. The main thing we look for in our students is teamwork, and Izzy is a great example of that,” Crews said.

Izzy’s father said her energy and personality amount to “a force of nature” and that she has a “tremendous sense of humor.”

He wrote, “She can always make me laugh, and I know she is the same way with her friends, too. She’s a pretty laid-back kid who trusts her inner instincts.”

Despite her commitment to a life-saving career, Izzy maintains that sense of humor. “Everywhere I’ve gone, I’ve always been known



Izzy waits to put on her gear alongside her classmates at Tri Heights Fire Tech program. She is the only Shaker student enrolled in the program. Photo courtesy of Brad Ortman







as the class clown,” she said.

As a female, Izzy also faces the challenge of being underrepresented in her field.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 252,000 people employed in firefighting occupations in the United States in 2016. Only 4.1 percent of them were women — a significant improvement upon the 0.1 percent figure in 1984.

There is historical precedent for female firefighters, however. During World War II, women served as firefighters in the United States to replace male firefighters who joined the military; in fact, during part of the war, two fire departments in Illinois were all-female.

In 1942, the first all-female forest firefighting crew in California was created.

Employed by the California Department of For-

estry, the crew comprised a foreman, a truck driver, an assistant driver, firefighters and a cook.

Despite being outnumbered by them, Izzy said her male colleagues are supportive, “The boys are really nice and are always encouraging us girls to step up to the plate. All the firefighting students are close. We are all a huge family.”

Crews is confident that Izzy will earn her EMT certification next year and go right into the field.

He said, “I think she will do well, and if she continues to work hard, she will get her certification, and it won’t take long for her to get hired.”

*Izzy stands in her gear, which weighs approximately 45 pounds, by a fire hydrant. Izzy fell in love with firefighting after attending a summer camp for public safety. Photo courtesy of Brad Ortman*



# Creating Change, But at What Cost?

Generation Z is under pressure to change the world all the while short-changing their own health

Ainsley Snyder Spotlight Editor

**Lazy, narcissistic and shallow.** What do these three adjectives have in common?

They were words used to describe Generation Z by the media.

That was before a wave of student activism flooded the country in light of the Feb. 14 shooting of 17 students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

Students are being targeted by people with guns in their “safe” schools now more than ever before. There have been 224 school shootings in the United States since the 1999 Columbine shooting. Because of this, the post-millennial generation is concerned with safety.

On April 20, 1999, two high school students killed 13 students and injured 24, then later killed themselves at their high school in Columbine, Colo. This was the beginning of the terror of mass shootings for Generation Z — and of the apathy older generations would begin to feel as they became increasingly common.

On April 16, 2007, a Virginia Tech student killed 32 fellow students and injured 23 others, introducing the fear that college students, too, are not safe on campus. On Dec. 14, 2012, elementary school students would begin to feel afraid to leave their homes and go to school after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, where 26 students and teachers were killed and two others injured.

Rather than waiting around for change, members of Generation Z are taking matters into their own hands, leading adults to rebrand them as “the



generation that will change the world.”

What do students think of this label?

“We’re not the generation that will change the world. We are the generation that is changing the world,” junior Kevin LaMonica said.

Sophomore Louise Spadoni believes the label is accurate. “Isn’t every generation the generation that is going to change the world? Because we are growing up and we’re going to be the ones voting and the ones in charge,” she said.

Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, includes people born between 1995 and 2012. Because most were born after 9/11, they have been shaped by terrorism; surrounded by screens from a young age, they have been shaped by technology; advocating for equal rights, they have been shaped by breaking traditions. They are the first generation in which everyone can be proud, no matter their race or sexual orientation.

Through her Snapchat account, Spadoni suggested a few days after the Parkland shooting that





Students hold up signs during the April 20 protest. Photo by David Vahey

Shaker students wear all black to school the following week to honor the 17 victims and bring attention to the issue of gun violence.

“I knew that Shaker would totally do a blackout, but I didn’t think [the news] would get out there like it did,” Spadoni said. “When I came to school, I was moved to tears. It was so powerful and amazing to see everyone coming together like that.”

Approximately 500 students walked out of the high school March 14 in 22-degree weather to participate in a 17 minutes of silence observed nationally to honor the Parkland victims. Students held posters stating the names and ages of the victims, and others held signs that stated, “Enough is Enough,” “Never Again,” and “More Love, Less Guns.”

The demonstration, organized and promoted by Shaker Students 4 Change, also aimed to protest insufficient gun control reforms and continue informing students about future walkouts and movements.

Senior Yasmine Kayali said that she thinks everyone is aware of high school students pushing for

stricter gun reform. “I think there’s a lot more that Generation Z is focusing on, and there’s a lot more to it than people would know from reading the news or looking on Twitter,” she said.

Spadoni noted such an example. “I was just reading about a girl who was rallying for change in Flint, Mich. against the water. There are so many kids on social media our age creating change,” she said. Toxic levels of lead were discovered in the Flint water supply in 2014, and the water remains unsafe.

LaMonica spoke, marched and helped to organize the March For Our Lives at Public Square in Cleveland on March 24, where an estimated 20,000 people were in attendance. “In writing the speech, there [were] a few things that I wanted to touch upon. The first was the cycle of no change after tragedies, the specific policy initiatives that the march was advocating for and the influence of the gun lobby on our government,” LaMonica said.





People hold signs and walk in the March For Our Lives on March 24 in Public Square to push for gun reform. Photo by Ainsley Snyder

He continued, “We see mass shooting after mass shooting, and elected officials give their thoughts and prayers, and then they wait for the conversation to die down. It’s important that this time is different, because this issue is a matter of life or death.”

The currency and accessibility of social media have altered the course by which ideas become activist movements.

“Technology helps these movements get started, and helps them spread to all different types of people across all different socioeconomic statuses and backgrounds,” sophomore Aaliyah Williams said.

LaMonica challenged a negative stereotype about Gen Z. “One of the names of our generation is ‘the iGeneration,’ but I think sometimes adults look at us and think, ‘Their faces are always in their

phones; they don’t care about anything,’” he said.

However, Laura Lewis, a member of the gun-reform group Moms Demand Action, recognized the role of social media and said that activism must extend to the ballot box.

“I think students need to register to vote and pay attention to all the elections, including your local elections,” Lewis said. “Make your voices heard. You have such power.”

“[Moms Demand Action] was one single person who just started a Facebook page, which now has ignited this movement,” she added.

Though today’s student-led protests are highly publicized on social and mass media, previous generations also saw plenty of student-led protests.

Dr. Malia McAndrew, an associate professor at John Carroll University, researches gender and race in modern America. “If you look at the civil rights movement, many of the people who were on

## KEY DATES

### April 20, 1999

Two boys aged 17 and 18 kill 13 people and injure 24 others before killing themselves at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colo.

### Sept. 13, 1994

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act bans the manufacture, use, possession and import of 19 types of assault weapons.

### May 14, 2000

750,000 people rally in Washington, D.C. at the Million Mom March to call for stricter gun control laws.

### Sept. 13, 2004


The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act expires and is not renewed in Congress.

### April 16, 2007

Before killing himself, a 23-year-old college student kills 32 students and faculty and injures 23 others at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

### Dec. 14, 2012

A 20-year-old man kills 20 elementary-aged students, four teachers, the principal, the school psychologist and his mother before committing suicide at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.



the front lines of that battle were pretty young,” she said. “When Martin Luther King Jr. was starting, he was in his early 20s. Many of the other people who led the sit-ins, the marches, the protests, they were all young, also.”

In 1960, four African-American students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University sat at a whites-only lunch counter to protest segregation in Greensboro, N.C. This protest inspired others around the country to take action with silent protest.

“If you look at any of the major movements for social change in the 20th century, often young people were an important part in those movements,” McAndrew said.

“Every generation passes the baton on from one generation to the next, so Generation Z has to change the world because it is in a position of power,” McAndrew said.

However, this rebranding of Gen Z as the hope of our country may create a burdensome, unattainable expectation.

According to Psychology Today, the average high school teenager has the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient did in 1950. According to Time magazine, depression rates have skyrocketed by 37 percent among members of Generation Z due to the pressures of school, home, society and technology.

“I do feel like Generation Z has a lot of pressure on them because society is changing so much,” school psychologist Sagar Patel said. Added to the constant pressures of jobs and colleges, he said, Generation Z kids have the stresses of high expectations from older generations.

But these trends were noted even before the Parkland shooting, and before Gen Z was labeled a force to change the world. Patel said that older gen-

erations may transfer their pressures to youth and mistakenly feel that their job is done. “If you’re living and breathing, you have a role to play,” he said.

Williams said that a lot of young people are anxious. “I know that most of us feel a lot of pressure from each other to make a better environment for ourselves because we know that other people aren’t going to do it for us,” she said.

African-American members of Gen Z are threatened and stressed by gun violence, and not just in school. Police shootings of unarmed African-American men dominate the news, leading to more stress about and fear of gun violence.

“I don’t live in a bad neighborhood. I live in the suburb of Shaker, which is a very calm and peaceful neighborhood,” Morgan said. “But, it does affect me directly because being black in America, you never know what’s going to happen, and you never know if you’re going to get pulled over because you forgot to turn on your turn signal, or you accidentally ran a stop sign, or the light turned red and you didn’t notice.”

The Black Lives Matter movement, created by young people after a Ferguson, Mo. police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, thrived through social media, where ideas of change are conveyed widely and motivate people to get involved. According to a study done by PSFK, an American company that focuses on consumer and corporate trends, 46 percent of Generation Z believe that they can contribute to changing the world.

Williams said, “Since we are the largest living generation, so many of us want to be activists and so many of us can’t deal with what’s happening around us. We all want to take action, and we will definitely be the generation to change things.”

*Journalism II Reporters Katie Cronin, Hilary Shakelton and Olivia Warren contributed reporting.*

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#### 2014

Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit aiming to reduce gun violence through common sense reforms, is founded.

#### Feb. 14, 2018

A 19-year-old former student shoots and kills 17 students and staff and injures 14 others at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

#### Feb. 18, 2018

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School junior Cameron Kasky announces his plans for the March For Our Lives in Washington D.C.

#### March 14, 2018

500 Shaker students walk out to honor the Parkland victims and 235 students sit in to protest, charging that the administration employed racial bias in supporting the March 14 walkout.

#### March 24, 2018

The national, student-led March For Our Lives takes place in Washington D.C. with 200,000 people in attendance. The march had 800 sibling events across the country, including downtown Cleveland.

#### April 20, 2018

Shaker students join a nationwide walkout to protest the lack of gun control on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shooting.



# WHAT THE REFS DON'T HEAR

Racial bias and offensive  
language target  
Shaker's African-  
American athletes

**DC Benincasa** Raider Zone Editor

**Racism in sports** isn't anything new.

African-American baseball pioneer Jackie Robinson faced death threats in the late 1940s. Former Los Angeles Clippers' owner Donald Sterling didn't want his girlfriend to bring her African-American friends to the team's games in 2014. In Europe, fans throw bananas at African-American professional soccer players.

And on Oct. 13, 2017, African-American Shaker football players were called "porch monkeys," according to junior running back Rasheen Ali.

Shaker is known for being a racially diverse, progressive community. Yet, not even the Shaker bubble can protect our African-American athletes from offensive, racist language.

On that night, Shaker's varsity football team trailed the Strongsville Mustangs by four points when senior Jamir Dismukes, an African-American quarterback, ran into the endzone. The scoreboard showed three seconds left, and the Shaker crowd and marching band erupted in celebration.

However, the referees had thrown a penalty flag on the field to call an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on Dismukes, who, en route to score, had altered



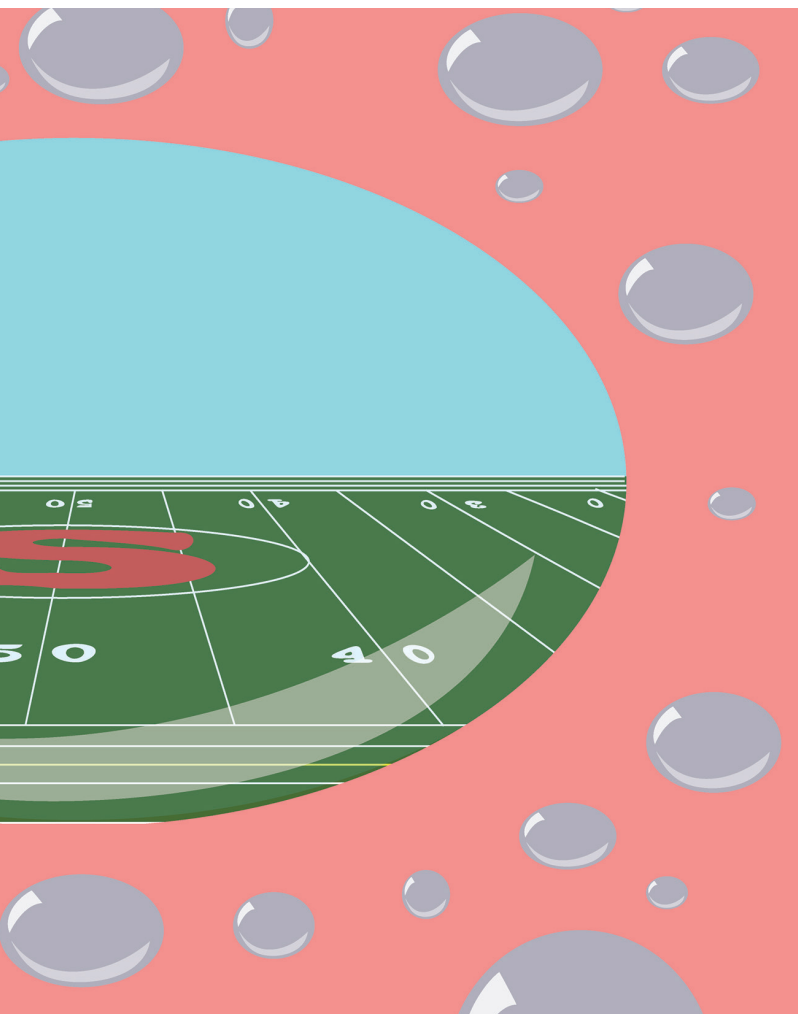
Alexa Jankowsky

his stride into a brief high-step with no opponents nearby. That action constitutes unsportsmanlike conduct, according to the Ohio High School Athletic Association rulebook. Because unsportsmanlike conduct is a dead ball foul, or a penalty called after a play ends, a 15-yard penalty is to be administered before the next play, rather than negating, or "calling back" the previous play.

However, instead of moving Shaker back 15 yards for the following extra point attempt, the referees took away the game-winning touchdown.

Earlier in the game, the same situation occurred. Senior Sam Meinhard, a white linebacker, was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct after a Raider touchdown. With that call, the referees let the touchdown stand and correctly applied the 15-yard penalty to the following extra point attempt.

Athletic Director Don Readance said that the second unsportsmanlike conduct call was especially frustrating because the officials had applied the rule correctly in the same scenario earlier in the game.



“They counted the touchdown in that situation and they moved the point-after 15 yards back. For some reason, they misapplied the rule at the end of the game,” Readance said.

Readance said that the reason for the blown call might be the race of the offending players; the officiating crew was all white, and the Strongsville team had only three African-American players. “If I had to place a bet, and I’m not a betting man, I do think there was some sort of bias in that call,” Readance said.

The two plays were almost identical. Each penalized a Shaker player for unsportsmanlike conduct following a touchdown. However, the call at the end of the game was on an African-American quarterback, taking away a win from Shaker, a team with only three white players.

Readance sent a video of the penalized play to OHSAA Assistant Commissioner Beau Rugg, who admitted that the call was incorrect and informed Readance that sanctions were leveled against the

officials.

“[The officials] were removed from playoff contests that they were supposed to work for this year and they might be put on probation for next year,” Readance said.

Although losing teams and their fans are known to rationalize defeat by blaming officials, the officials’ act in this case did lose the game for Shaker. And we cannot know whether race played a role in the mistaken application of the unsportsmanlike conduct rule. But Shaker athletes more often experience racism through comments from opponents, most of which go unnoticed by officials, than from controversial calls.

Ali said that during the Strongsville game, players called him and his teammates “porch monkeys,” a racial slur, in between plays.

The term originated in the south in the early 1900s, when African-Americans started building bungalow-style homes with front porches. The phrase is a derogatory term for African-Americans; it implies that they are lazy and have nothing better to do than to sit on their porches.

Ali added that the opponents chanted the N-word at him and his teammates, but the referees couldn’t hear this abusive language because Strongsville football players uttered it while Shaker players were on the ground.

Senior tight end Billy Dunn, who is biracial, confirmed that he heard Strongsville players calling his teammates the N-word. He added that they called him a “n\*\*\*\*\*-lover” when he was close to their sideline.

Andy Jalwan, Strongsville’s athletic director, did not respond to request for comment in time for publication.

School counselor David Peake said he was surprised when football players came to his office and casually mentioned that Strongsville players called them the N-word. He explained that these players came to him to talk about their unfair loss, not the racist language.

“Students didn’t come to me to report it. This is what is really alarming. They didn’t come to say, ‘Hey, we were getting called the N-word.’ They are so used to it that to them, it wasn’t even a concern,”



Peake said.

He added that athletes have previously come to talk to him about racist language used by opposing teams. "I hate the fact that young men that are a few years younger than me have to accept that like it's a part of the game," he said.

Junior cheerleader Erin Harris said she saw Strongsville students displaying fake gang signs during the game and that a friend overheard racist insults about Shaker.

Harris said, "One of my friends was at the concessions line and a boy said, 'You need to say 'Yo, dawg' when talking to [Shaker students] because they don't speak proper English over there.'"

In a letter to Rugg and former OHSAA Commissioner Dan Ross, Readance raised the possibility of requiring officials to watch a video that would enhance their ability to deal with diversity. "There are prejudiced people everywhere. To think that all officials are fair and not biased is just foolish," he said.

Rugg and Ross invited Readance to Columbus to discuss his idea. "I feel good that they had me come down and that they took my letter seriously," Readance said. "Whether or not they implement something with regards to cultural sensitivity training for officials — it's something I will follow up with them to see that something comes to fruition."

Peake, who advises the high school's student branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the club is also advocating for diversity training for officials.

Peake explained why the controversial call is an example of structural racism. "We have someone that scores a touchdown, and then you take the touchdown back. The penalty for that is not taking the touchdown away; the penalty for that is something else. In my opinion, that's what structural racism looks like: Where you have this structure in place, you have people in certain roles that can exercise authority however they want to," he said.

There is nothing in the OHSAA Officials Handbook that addresses how to handle offensive language. However, Rugg said that it's clear to officials that it's necessary to penalize language they deem offensive. "If you don't penalize it, then someone else thinks that language is OK," he said.

He also added that penalizing such language can prevent fighting or other physical responses. "In sports, if language offends somebody and [an official calls it], then it will prevent worse physical contact," Rugg said.

He said that officials call on athletic directors to extinguish offensive chants or racist language that comes from fans, but "officials are directly responsible for those on the field and court." Rugg also emphasized that it can be difficult to hear offensive language during a game.

In football, for example, it's hard for referees to hear players' language due to the distance they are required to maintain from players for safety reasons.

Referees also need to pay attention to every facet of the game. So Rugg, a former official, said that it's common to become "tone deaf to what the players are saying" in order to focus on other details of the game.

Rugg said nonverbal cues are easier to penalize than verbal cues because officials don't have to be close to the players to see gestures

and body language. For example, it's easier to see a player physically intimidate an opponent than it is to overhear racist language during a game.

Football players are not the only Shaker athletes who have endured racist language while competing. On April 10, racial slurs were directed at sophomore Elliot Green and junior Carlos Hill during an away junior varsity lacrosse game against Medina High School.

Green, who's biracial, said a Medina player made racist comments toward him during a timeout.

"As we were going to the sidelines for the timeout, he said, 'Stupid n\*\*\*\*\*.' I asked him, 'What

**"If you don't  
penalize it,  
then someone  
else thinks that  
language is OK."**

**Beau Rugg  
OHSAA Assistant  
Commissioner**

did you say?" And he said it again as he was walking away," Green said.

Green also heard the same Medina player tell Hill that he was "going to lynch him in front of a Christmas tree."

Hill said he heard the Medina player call Green the N-word. "His teammates told him to stop, but he didn't. Then he came over to me and called me the N-word and told me he was going to lynch me," Hill said.

Green added that Medina players told their teammate, who was defending Green, to leave Green and cover another Shaker player.

"The other defender came to guard me, and he said, 'That kid is pretty stupid. He always argues with our coach every day. He's got a problem, or something,'" he said.

Green and Hill told their coach, who then told Medina's coach. The Medina coach suspended the player indefinitely, according to Readance.

Hill said his coaches were proud that he didn't react aggressively. "They encouraged me to ignore ignorance and do my best on the field," he said.

Readance explained the procedure for dealing

with offensive language at high school games.

"If something happens at an athletic event, the first step is the player tells the coach. Then, the coach tells the opposing coach. If there's an official within earshot, you should let the official know, just so that nothing escalates into something further," he said.

Readance added that the severity of the language might require further disciplinary action. "At the very least, there's an athletic consequence. Every district is going to handle it differently, and we can't dictate that," he said. "Nor can anybody dictate how we discipline our kids."

Readance explained that the harsh reality of our time is that there are still racist individuals in our communities.

"There are [racist] people out there. We have [racist] people in this building. We have racist people everywhere," he said. "I don't know if this is because of the climate of the country, or because the politics in every age becomes more emboldened to speak out."

Shaker football players said that their Strongsville opponents used racial slurs in their Oct. 13, 2017 game. Photo courtesy of Don Readance.





# What's Your Top 10?

I sat in my basement, flipping through a “Star Wars” poster book and listening to Nirvana’s “Nevermind” at its highest volume without blowing out the speakers. I had just finished watching Christopher Nolan’s “Inception” while perusing a Mustang book and trying to figure out which 1969 Boss Model my grandfather had before the repaint.

I’ve spent a lot of my last two years in my basement. I have my books, albums, blu-rays and video games down there. I keep a blue notebook



Joe Schmidt

and a pen so I can write my thoughts and insert new opinions into my lists.

I’ve always loved ranking things. It started with the International Movie Database Top 250. I wanted to participate in conversations

with my older brother, a movie connoisseur.

So, I sought to watch as many of the 250 movies as I could. I saw it not as a task, but as simply getting cultured.

My friend showed me his record player, and due to the sound quality, I decided to get one as well. After this, I started listening to entire albums, rather than singular songs. With Spotify and other digital mediums, one can pick and choose songs from an album to listen to. However, having a record player forces you to listen to the entire album.

Rolling Stone publishes extensive album and artist rankings. I found them useful in showing off to people how many bands I knew that they didn’t. My lists have become a source of pride.

I religiously watch a YouTube channel called “TheNeedleDrop” that ranks new albums on a 1-10 scale.

I like to have a command of albums and be able to refer to them by number.

I shoot texts back and forth with friends about rankings. We rank Zeppelin albums, Tarantino

movies, sports teams and books.

I was adjusting my Beatles album rankings after listening to “Sgt. Pepper” on a \$25,000 system when I realized something: There isn’t a good reason why we put certain things in order from best to worst, but we do it anyway.

It’s satisfying to be in control and narrow down a full category of things into numbers; maybe that’s why I like to do it. Regardless, it has become a habit over the years.

As a society, we feel the need to put a number beside everything — I am especially guilty. We rank presidents. We rank players and sports franchises. It’s almost inconsiderate to boil down all kinds of effort and struggle into a slot on a list. However, we still do it.

I try not to look at my national squash ranking at all; I check maybe three times a year, as it’s either met with disappointment or satisfaction. It seems that I like ranking when I’m the one doing it, but not vice versa.

When talking with my parents at the dinner table, I often share about my day. One day, we were discussing college, and I thought that there should be some sort of algorithm that could narrow a kid’s classes, extracurriculars, scores and awards to a single number or score. This would make the admissions process much easier. The business side of me thought it was brilliant, but my moral side later realized its injustice.

Putting a person — with feelings and emotions — beside a number doesn’t do their high school performance justice.

Rankings can hurt. The world won’t stop doing it, and neither will I. It’s one of my favorite things to do when I’m doing nothing. However, when I do it from now on, I will think of all of the work that went into the process of whatever I’m ranking when I’m boiling down blood, sweat and tears to a slot on lined paper.

## POSSIBLE MIDDLE NAMES OF DR. GREGORY C. HUTCHINGS

- + Cornelius
- + Chester
- + Copernicus
- + Communications
- + The letter 'C'
- + Cosgrove
- + Cecil



## The Time Millionaires\* of Shaker Heights High School

Girls who straighten their hair in  
the bathroom during class

99% of people walking in the main hallway

Based on Twitter activity: Principal Kuehnle

\*An individual who possesses  
unimaginable quantities of spare time



**Senior Prank Culture**  
(Every other year - 2018)

**Dr. Hutchings' Tenure in Shaker**  
(2013 - 2018)

**Kuehnle's ID Policy**  
(Jan. 22, 2018 - Jan. 22, 2018)

## QUIZ

### Which is an actual Kuehnle tweet?

- A) "Walkouts are cool, but do you know what's cooler?  
Wearing your ID in the hallways!"
- B) "Wow! 'Arty on!"
- C) "K-dawg here, wishing you all happy EOC testing!"
- D) "The Middle School Orchestra did almost as great a  
job as I did performing the national anthem at the base-  
ball game yesterday. JK!"

Answer: B

## PHOTOSHOP FAIL OF THE YEAR



## 8-Second Movie Reviews



### "Infinity Wars"

[This review has been  
redacted for spoilers.]



### "A Quiet Place"

So, contraceptives don't  
exist in 2020?

## KUEHNLE'S CORNER

### Kuehnle Overestimates Hot Dog Supply

In a May 4 email to faculty, Principal Jonathan Kuehnle invited staff members to partake in the senior's Lawn Day festivities, in which hot dogs are grilled, writing, "AVI is once again grilling out — all are invited to join us!" However, in another email later that day, Kuehnle regretfully informed staff that AVI, the providers of said hot dogs, did not, in fact, have enough resources for both the seniors and the new, impromptu guests. "From an earlier conversation, I mistakenly believed that there would be enough food for all the seniors, plus supervising security and staff," he wrote. "I apologize if this caused any awkwardness or frustration." He ended the email by promising that next year there will be enough food for everyone, simultaneously creating a new tradition of Lawn Day not being just for the Seniors, but "everyone who wants to be there" as well.





